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the weekly

# Standard

MARCH 21, 2011

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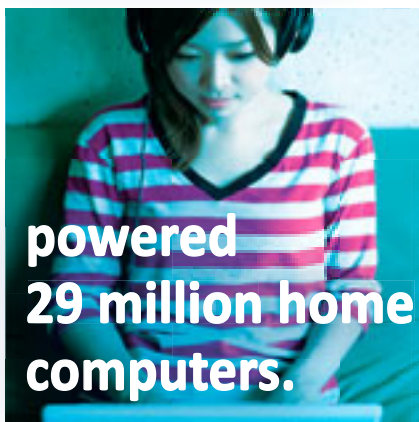
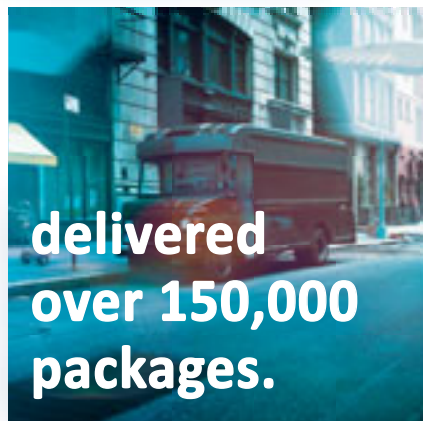
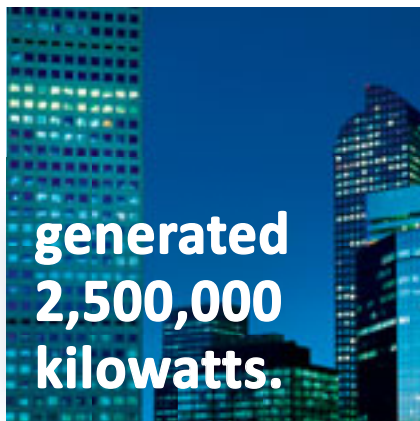
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BY JOSEPH EPSTEIN

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at Northwestern University

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COVER BY THOMAS FLUHARTY





# Barack Jintao

Buried at the end of an otherwise milquetoast *New York Times* article (“Obama Seeks a Course of Pragmatism in the Middle East,” which THE SCRAPBOOK supposes is a generous interpretation of the fact that there’s no outward sign the White House has any clue whatsoever) was this jarring nugget of reporting:

Mr. Obama has told people that it would be so much easier to be the president of China. As one official put it, “No one is scrutinizing Hu Jintao’s words in Tahrir Square.”

Indeed. When you’re president of China and you’re concerned that people in the hinterlands are bitterly clinging to their guns ’n’ religion, you can simply take those things away. When you’re president of China, all radio is National Public Radio. When you’re president of China, you don’t have to worry about annoying off-year elections. When you’re president of China . . . We could go on.

No doubt some readers are stunned that a democratically elected president would empathize with the leader of the deadliest regime in

human history. (In the wake of new archival evidence unearthed last year, one prominent University of Hong Kong professor now places the death toll of Mao’s Great Leap Forward at 45 million.)

However, THE SCRAPBOOK can’t say it was astonished at Obama’s lament. Wistful affection for China’s authoritarian government has been à la mode among the punditocracy for so long now, that it was only a matter of time before this sentiment reached the top. The *New York Times*’s Thomas Friedman has made a cottage industry out of China-envy, churning out column after column on the topic. “Watching both the health care and climate/energy debates in Congress, it is hard not to draw the following conclusion: There is only one thing worse than one-party autocracy, and that is one-party democracy, which is what we have in America today,” he famously wrote in Walter Duranty’s newspaper.

In particular, China’s high speed rail fetish and pronouncements about global warming have captivated American liberals—the real-

ity of China’s horrific environmental and traffic problems notwithstanding. The *Nation*’s Washington editor Christopher Hayes, for instance, has observed, “Uncomfortable thought: If China were to become democratic, its climate policy would get much worse.” Unlike Friedman, Hayes at least acknowledges he’s conflicted.

But the Walter Duranty Prize for Useful Idiocy must be bestowed on *Washington Post* wunderkind Ezra Klein, who took a junket to China last year. After a guided tour of a government-planned condo development—an almost literal Potemkin village—Klein breathlessly reported: “A conversation with some residents revealed that they didn’t just get one free apartment in the new building. They got four free apartments, three of which they were now renting out. And medical coverage. And money for furnishings. And a food stipend. And—I’m not kidding, by the way—birthday cakes on their birthdays. Sweet deal.”

Who among us, let alone the Leader of the Free World, is immune to the allure of free birthday cake? ♦

## David S. Broder, 1929-2011

THE SCRAPBOOK was not above poking occasional fun at David S. Broder, the longtime *Washington Post* reporter and columnist, as a fairly reliable bellwether of the received wisdom in political Washington. This was not meant as an insult. When he died last week at 81, Broder had been a Washington correspondent for nearly 60 years—for the *Post* through four decades, the old *Washington Evening Star* and, briefly, the *New York Times*—and was about as plugged-in as anyone could be with the bosses, the activists, the chattering classes, the movers and shakers, and elected

officials who, through a sociopolitical osmosis, arrive at consensus in the nation’s capital about issues and personalities. To use one well-worn journalistic phrase, Broder had his finger on the pulse of political Washington, and (phrase number two) he knew which way the wind blew.

But there were two good reasons why Broder was almost universally liked and admired, by people of all parties and persuasions. First, he was a tireless reporter. On the weekend he might be seen on one of the political chat shows (he appeared on *Meet the Press* over 400 times) or at a White House dinner, but on Monday morning he would be just as reliably spotted at an obscure congressional

hearing, think tank seminar, press conference in Iowa, or New Hampshire kaffeeklatsch.

Second, he was invariably fair in his treatment of everyone and everything he wrote about. Broder never hid his own center-left views; but he took conservatism and conservatives seriously, wrote or cowrote three good books about Republicans, dealt with people and issues respectfully, and studiously avoided the strident ad hominem tone of much contemporary political rhetoric.

He was also, to use another well-worn phrase, a gentleman of the old school, kind and courteous to all who crossed his path. THE SCRAPBOOK will miss him. ♦



## Tomorrow's 'Treasures' Today

The vigilant folks at the Smithsonian National Museum of American History are working hard to preserve what they take to be our nation's heritage. And because preservation can be a tricky business (if you blink you could miss history-in-the-making), they are scavenging for items today that down the road might hold "historic significance."

Thus the museum last week sent curator Barbara Clark Smith to Madison, Wisconsin, to collect materials to document the heated battle there over legislation to reform collective bargaining. More specifically, the curators wanted to make sure they will be in a position to memorialize the labor protests at the state capitol (even if these did turn out to be the Custer's Last Stand of Wisconsin's public employee unions). According to Valeska Hilbig of Smithsonian public affairs: "If we don't collect these things now, they're lost forever." The horror!

So what "things" must be saved? The political history division of the

museum, which Smith represents, regularly scouts for items that will document "how Americans participate in the political process"; collected artifacts will likely include protest signs and buttons. THE SCRAPBOOK hopes they remember to pick up the "Scott Walker = Adolf Hitler" sign, not to mention the one that featured the governor with the Führer's mustache and the slogan "Exterminating Union Members." These will make for interesting exhibits in a future display, showing how, at a time when the American right had a notorious civility problem, the left was abiding by Marquess of Queensberry rules.

The great unanswered question is which of the museum's compelling artifacts—the original Michael Jackson hat? Disneyland's Dumbo the Flying Elephant? Phyllis Diller's cigarette holder?—will have to go into cold storage to free up display cases for the artifacts rescued from the tons of litter left by protesters in Madison.

Alas, the impulse that sends Smithsonian curators scurrying off to Wisconsin is nothing new. Andrew Ferguson memorably described the

ideological deformation of the NMAH in a December 15, 2008, cover story for this magazine, "The Past Isn't What It Used to Be":

At the Smithsonian the curators appeared lost in a dorm room bull session or the defense of a second-rate dissertation. A wall plaque from a recent exhibit gives the flavor: "In daily life, national identity often merges, overlaps, and interacts with many other kinds of identities, [which] can help illuminate the forces that have shaped American history." The plaque was alongside a display of a cheesehead hat from the 1996 Clinton-Gore campaign.

The theorizing of social history offered curators an excuse to display anything. The castoffs of popular culture proved irresistible—and not just celebrity-touched "icons" like Archie Bunker's chair, still bearing the imprint of Carroll O'Connor's hallowed buttocks, or the zippered sweater from Mister Rogers's creepy neighborhood. One of thousands of Barbie dolls manufactured in 1960 could qualify; ditto a Swanson's TV dinner tray from 1967, a pair of Keds sneakers, a Topps baseball card, a nurse's cap. These along with that Clinton-Gore cheesehead were part

of a display called “Treasures”: “One hundred fifty of our most prized and important artifacts.”

Sometimes the criteria seemed more journalistic than historical. When cops busted a sweatshop in El Monte California in 1995, Smithsonian curators swooped in, dismantled the room, and trucked it back to the museum in Washington, where it was reassembled and labeled “iconic.” In the 1980s, AIDS activists could scarcely keep their famous quilt together for fear of NMAH curators’ grabbing another scrap to show museumgoers.

The detritus from Madison will be right at home. ♦

## Take Our Apologies, Please

A reader kindly points out that in last week’s Parody, we mismatched the name of Shecky Greene with the face of Shelley Berman—the photo service Newscom, which provided us with the picture, had originally made the error in its caption and we failed to spot it. Yes, there are similarities: Both men are famous (and now elderly) Jewish comedians, and both are from Chicago. Still, it’s no excuse.

Indeed THE SCRAPBOOK, which every week joins in the proofreading of the Parody, is especially regretful, because we had near at hand but neglected to consult the classic volume from illustrator Drew Friedman, *Old Jewish Comedians* (2006), which prominently features portraits of both men. Friedman has graciously allowed us to reproduce them here, by way of penance. (And while we’re on the subject, the Friedman volume in question was the first in a brilliant series: *More*

## Sentences We Didn’t Finish

‘According to the list makers at *Forbes*, I am the 50th most powerful person in the world—not as powerful as the Pope (No. 5) but more powerful than the president of the United Arab Emirates (56). *Vanity Fair*, another arbiter of what matters, ranked me the 26th most influential person in the country. The *New York Observer*, narrowing the universe to New York, put me 15th on its latest . . . ” (Bill Keller, *New York Times*, March 13, 2011). ♦

*Old Jewish Comedians* came out three years ago, and *Even MORE Old Jewish Comedians* is due out later this year.)

What’s more, THE SCRAPBOOK loves Borscht Belt humor and hopes both men will find it in their hearts to forgive us—especially Mr. Greene, who recently underwent cancer treatment at the Mayo Clinic, which turned out to be unnecessary. Since then, the poor guy’s been saying, “Hold the Mayo.” *Ba-dump*. Greene was once assaulted by thugs outside the Sands hotel in Las Vegas. Luckily Frank Sinatra appeared and saved his life—Frank told his men to stop beating him up. *Ba-dump*. And that reminds us, for our anniversary, MRS. SCRAPBOOK said she wants to go somewhere she’s never been before. THE SCRAPBOOK said, try the kitchen. *Ba-dump-bump*.

We’ll be here all week. ♦



Shelley Berman, top, and Shecky Greene, bottom.

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# This Land Is My Land

On St. Patrick's Day, everyone's a little bit Irish. And like many Americans, I actually have some Irish blood.

My mother's father's mother was named Naughton, a common surname in western Ireland, and the name of the town our Naughtons came from is Ballinlough, in County Roscommon. That's more information than most Americans have, so I thought I'd put it to good use while I was studying for a semester at the university in Galway. Armed only with those names, an incomplete family tree, and a mental picture based on old photographs of the Naughton homestead, I hopped on a bus one Saturday to see what I could find.

Three hours, one missed connection, ten minutes of thumbing for a ride, and one kind lady driver later, I arrived in tiny Ballinlough. The streets were empty, and the shops were quiet. This being Ireland, I knew I'd find someone in the nearest pub to point me in the right direction. Inside, the barman told me some folks named Naughton lived just down the road.

So off I went, hiking away from the small cluster of buildings into the countryside. I turned left onto a gravelly road that stretched southward. The rolling green fields were partitioned by ancient stone walls. Tall, leafy trees lined the road and dotted the scene, and low-slung bungalows appeared sporadically as my feet carried me closer to—well, to what exactly I wasn't sure.

Who were these people, these supposed relatives I was seeking out?

Were they even anyone I'd want to meet? Maybe they were IRA militants. Maybe they spoke only Irish. What if they were bitter about having had to stay and tend the family farm while other Naughtons scuttled off to live the easy life in America?

Lost in these thoughts, I almost went right past a woman in a track suit power-walking toward me. But



*Moigh*

she greeted me cheerfully and fell right in with my mission. She said her friends the Burkes were the Naughtons' cousins and lived just down the road. She'd take me there.

With that, we power-walked to the Burkes', and Tom Burke agreed to drive me up in his car to see the "Naughton boys." "They might be a bit drunk," he warned. It was eleven in the morning. Great, I thought, and I bet they make bombs in their toolshed.

But then I saw the house through a light scattering of trees. There it was: two stories, red roof and trim, larger than most but not pretentious or imposing. This was the house my grandfather's grandfather, James

Naughton, helped build by sending back money from the modest fortune he made in the States. Just a few hundred feet farther up the road was the original Naughton house, the squat stone cottage, built a century and a half ago, where James was born. I recognized these places.

We went up to the main house and knocked on the door. "Mikey!" Tom shouted. "It's Tom Burke." There was no answer for a few seconds, and then a large, older man in boots and gloves came around from behind the house. He had my grandfather's eyes.

Mike Naughton was sober, as far as I could tell, and he spoke English perfectly well, though with a thick brogue. He seemed delighted to have an American visitor. Mike, Tom, and I sat down in the kitchen with Mike's brother Tommy, four cousins with two names among us. (We'd see lots more of both later, along with Jameses, Johns, and Patricks, at the parish graveyard up the road.)

We soon figured out our relationship: The Naughton boys were my second cousins twice removed; that is, their great-grandfather was my great-great-great-grandfather. Mike and Tommy brought out their own pictures and told me

their father was an accomplished accordionist. I related the death of a cousin they had known when they were much younger and I had met as a child after he moved to America. The hour we spent telling stories and cracking jokes flew by. I hope I can see them again.

Not far from the Naughtons' house, a ruined church sits atop a hill called Moigh. Locals told me that St. Patrick once stopped to pray in that spot when he was a young man walking across Ireland. As we drove past Moigh, I said a little prayer myself. Even thousands of miles from my family in the States, I was home.

**MICHAEL WARREN**



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# Energy in the Executive



Anyone who's been to a gas station recently knows the feeling. There you are, about to refuel, when you see the price of regular gasoline: about \$3.52 per gallon, up 77 cents since 2010. Your pulse quickens. Your stomach sinks. Because this is not a dream. The days of \$4.00-a-gallon gas are about to return.

How we got here is no mystery. The turmoil in the Middle East, including a supply disruption in war-torn Libya, raises market anxiety. The flood of money coming from the Federal Reserve contributes to commodity price inflation from food to precious metals to oil. Increased demand, in emerging markets in particular, translates into more expensive fuel at home.

The appropriate policy responses are also unmysterious: The sooner Muammar Qaddafi is overthrown, the faster supplies can be restored. Ending the Fed's program of monetary stimulus would reduce the amount of dollars inflating the commodities bubble. And the best way to compensate for rising demand is to increase supply.

We wish we could say that President Obama is pursuing such a course. But the five people who managed to stay awake during his soporific press conference last week know that Obama's lassitude is boundless. He says he wants Qaddafi out, but doesn't appear interested in doing much to make it happen. He's given Fed chairman Ben Bernanke free rein to accelerate the recovery, but doesn't seem worried about the long-term consequences of inflationary policies. He proudly (and correctly) touts the fact that in 2010 domestic oil production reached its highest level in seven years. But he doesn't grasp that supply must increase by a lot more, and a lot more quickly, if Americans are to enjoy affordable fuel.

"We need to continue to boost domestic production of oil and gas," Obama said last week. How? The president wants to know if the oil companies are sitting on any untapped reserves. He'd like to see further research and exploration and "information gathering." He said that "We're looking at potential new development in Alaska." Someone should put the president's portrait next to the dictionary definition of "passing the buck." There are plenty of ways to encourage production right now. Moping that it takes time for new fields to come online is no excuse. If the government had responded to the widespread outcry to drill three years ago, we'd be that much closer to having additional supplies of energy today.

All President Obama needs to do is to have Reggie Love print him out a copy of the "Roadmap for America's Energy Future." Authored by Republican Devin Nunes of California, the energy roadmap is a comprehensive strategy to increase production in a responsible way. Nunes would open the Outer Continental Shelf to oil and gas exploration, allow drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge after years of delay, restore oil shale leases that the Obama administration canceled in 2009, and repeal the prohibition on government purchases of "coal-to-liquid" synthetic fuel. He'd forbid the Environmental Protection Agency from regulating carbon dioxide as a pollutant. He'd mandate permits for 200 additional nuclear plants over the next 30 years.

Better yet, Nunes would do all this while establishing a "Renewable Energy Trust Fund." Government revenue from carbon-based energy would be dedicated to research into alternatives like wind, solar, biomass, and more. The money would be disbursed through a reverse auction in

which projects with the greatest potential energy efficiency win contracts. Once they enter into the contract, recipients would forgo all other tax credits and would place a deposit in the Treasury. If the project fails, the recipients lose funding—and the deposit.

The energy roadmap is another example of the GOP House setting the agenda for the eventual Republican presidential nominee. It's a safe bet that demand for Nunes's program will rise in direct proportion to gasoline prices. Nor will that demand be partisan. There are plenty of Democrats, many of them senators from red states, who are interested in reducing the de facto tax that voters pay whenever energy prices rise. We're sure that Nunes would be happy to discuss his ideas with them, and with President Obama, at their convenience. If the meeting doesn't take place, well, we'll all be hearing from the American people—on energy, on health care, on the economy, on the budget, and much else—in November 2012.

—Matthew Continetti

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# Tales from the Media Crypt

It is difficult but often advisable to resist the temptation to comment on media bias. Any rational consumer of media, let alone those with conservative leanings, knows such bias exists. To comment on every example would amount to an exercise in necro-equine sadism. There are times, however, when the extent of the problem surpasses the expectations of even the most jaded observer. This is such a time.

Take, for example, the recent hidden camera sting of National Public Radio by the conservative provocateur James O'Keefe. Some years ago, the playwright and screenwriter David Mamet joked that NPR stood for "National Palestinian Radio." But it was hard to imagine that NPR executive Ron Schiller would meet with two men who openly admitted having ties to the Muslim Brotherhood, entertain their offer to donate \$5 million to NPR, and denigrate the religious beliefs of Tea Partiers before describing them as "gun-toting," "scary," and "seriously racist, racist people." All of which Schiller did. On tape.

The video is so obviously damning that NPR's federal funding is imperiled. Schiller now finds himself unemployed, as does NPR CEO Vivian Schiller (no relation), who became infamous last October when she said that any discomfort ex-NPR analyst Juan Williams had while flying beside individuals dressed in "Muslim garb" was between him and his psychiatrist. An open letter signed by 23

NPR journalists and released on March 10 repudiates Ron Schiller's remarks. Yet NPR still has no shortage of media apologists.

"I'm always left wondering just how much those folks on tape are behaving sincerely, and how much they are trying to be polite, to muddle through in unusual circumstances," wrote the *Washington Post's* Stephen Stromberg. But judging Ron Schiller's condescending and insulting remarks about the Tea Party does not involve a complex moral calculus. The only thing to wonder about now is to what extent the media will ignore reporting on the NPR story because they fear self-indictment.

Yet NPR was hardly the only media institution that embarrassed itself last week by exhibiting lackluster professional standards. To take another example, the *New York Times* finally decided that New Jersey governor Chris Christie has become more credible and popular than a GOP politician has any right to be, and set out to cut the admittedly ample governor down to size.

The resulting front page article, "Christie's Talk Is Blunt, but Not Always Straight," was alternately petty and wrong. The *Times* asserted that Christie is inaccurate to say public workers in New Jersey pay "nothing" for health care costs—in fact, the Gray Lady pronounced, those workers have contributed 1.5 percent of their salaries to health care costs since 2007. Compared with the expensive health insurance premiums private sector workers have paid for decades, this paltry contribution might as well be "nothing." To call Christie dishonest is a lawyerly cheap shot.

The *Times* also attacks the governor for wrongly asserting that "dozens" of states lack collective bargaining rights for public workers. However, 24 states and the federal government do limit collective bargaining rights for public workers. Not that the *Times* lets necessary context get in the way of attacking Chris Christie.

The *Washington Post* joined in the media follies too, publishing an article with the web headline, "Japanese Americans: House hearings on radical Islam 'sinister.'" The article, labeled as "news," explicitly compared Homeland Security chairman Rep. Peter King of New York's long-overdue hearings on Islamic radicals in America to the indiscriminate internment of Japanese citizens during World War II. Suffice it to say, most Americans are rightly concerned about Islamic terrorism, and their fears are unlikely to be allayed by the media's preoccupation with politically correct hyperbole.

*Schadenfreude* is a capricious sprite, and reveling in the fact that the media are working so hard to discredit themselves is of limited value. (Unless, of course, you're Juan Williams. In that case, go ahead and indulge yourself.) Still, simply noting that the media are on the defensive or increasingly brazen in their attempts to shade the truth is worthwhile. Why? Because it tells conservatives something important: We're winning.

—Mark Hemingway



# On Wisconsin!

## How the Republicans won the battle of Madison.

BY STEPHEN F. HAYES AND JOHN MCCORMACK

Scott Walker was finished. It was Wednesday, March 9, and Governor Walker had decided to visit the Wisconsin State Capitol before he headed off to give his “Ag Day” speech that afternoon.

Walker figured he had been very patient. Four weeks earlier he had proposed his budget repair bill, and he had the votes to pass it. But one week after that, all 14 Democratic state senators fled to Illinois to deny Republicans the quorum they thought necessary to hold a vote on the legislation. In the days that followed, top Republican legislators and senior aides to Walker spoke regularly with Democrats in an effort to forge a compromise—several times believing that they had reached a tentative understanding that would allow the senate to take up the controversial measure, only to have the agreement collapse. The more this happened the less likely a compromise seemed.

So, shortly before 11 A.M. on Wednesday, Walker addressed a meeting of the senate Republican caucus. It was time to end the standoff and move forward, he said. The world didn’t know it, but Republicans had been given the tools to do that two days earlier, in rulings from three nonpartisan bodies that allowed them to tweak the bill slightly and pass it with only a simple majority present in the senate. But Walker kept his comments general. He said that while Wisconsinites were divided about the wisdom of his proposals, there was widespread agreement that the stalemate had to end.

At a press conference that afternoon, a reporter asked Walker about a letter to him from senate minority leader Mark Miller. Walker had not

received the letter—it was released to the media before it was delivered to his office. Miller offered two choices he knew would be rejected and said that if Walker did not meet his demands it would be clear the governor wanted to “keep lines of communications closed.”

It was a final act of bad faith from Miller. A few hours later, Republicans in the state senate moved swiftly to pass the tweaked bill. And two days later, Walker signed it.

It was over.

What happened in Wisconsin has broad implications. The state is only one of many that face massive deficits following years of irresponsible spending—in Wisconsin, \$3.6 billion over the next two years. Walker ran for governor last fall on reducing that spending and balancing the budget. He won with more than 52 percent of the vote. So he proposed a budget repair bill to begin that process.

Democrats, who lost not only the governor’s mansion but also both chambers of the state legislature, were powerless to stop Walker from implementing his agenda. Encouraged by the interest groups that help elect them, particularly the unions, these Democrats did the one thing they could to slow him down. It didn’t work. The failure of their effort and the enactment of the reforms will have profound policy and political consequences, not only for Wisconsin but also for the country.

As it was originally proposed, Walker’s budget repair bill had two main components. The first would require public employees paid by the state government to contribute more to the cost of their health care and pensions. The second would limit the collective bargaining power of public employee unions to wages, a change that would allow county and local

governments to undertake cost-saving measures without having them blocked by unions.

The unions quickly conceded the first of these two points—at least rhetorically. Union leaders and their allies in the state legislature claimed that public employees would gladly contribute more to their pensions and health care premiums—the 5.8 percent of their salaries on the former and 12.6 percent of the premiums on the latter requested by the governor—if they were allowed to keep all of their collective bargaining rights.

It was a smart public relations move. The unions seemed reasonable and willing to negotiate.

Walker was portrayed in the media as obstinate and too eager to “strip the collective bargaining rights” of Wisconsin’s public employees. His poll numbers reflected the criticism.

But even as they offered to contribute more, unions throughout Wisconsin were rushing through contract extensions that would exempt them from having to pay more towards benefits. In some localities, public employee unions were not only pushing to avoid the increased benefit contributions, they were attempting to force through pay raises.

Unions claimed that they objected chiefly to the limits on collective bargaining, which they said would leave public employees vulnerable to unjust firings and unfair changes to their benefits. The unions also objected to a provision that would allow public employees to choose for themselves whether to join the union and pay dues—a departure from current law. Other states that had implemented these changes had seen union membership drop precipitously, and union leaders understood that the corresponding loss of power and money would be devastating.

So despite the fact that there are dozens of states without collective bargaining for public employees, and that most federal workers do not have collective bargaining rights, and that the increases in benefit contributions contained in the budget repair bill were modest—leaving state employees considerably better off than their

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private-sector counterparts—union bosses mobilized their resources to fight in Madison. The rallies were huge—with organizational help from the Democratic National Committee and the good fortune that Madison, with its graying radicals and leftist college students, is better prepared for an insta-protest than just about any other city in the country. So for weeks, as Democratic senators hid in Illinois and malcontents camped in the capitol at times literally blocked legislative action, the protesters chanted, “This is how democracy works.”

As soon as the senate Democrats left town, Republicans began to explore their options for passing the budget repair bill without them. There was talk—public and private—about “splitting” the bill to get around the need for a three-fifths quorum. For most, this meant separating the two main provisions of the legislation—the collective bargaining reforms in one bill and the benefit contribution increases in another.

Walker didn’t want to do this. Democrats were accusing him of including the collective bargaining restrictions for no other reason than to weaken unions, saying the collective bargaining provisions had no fiscal impact. On the surface, separating the bills would seem to validate this criticism, although no one knows better than union bosses just how important a tool limiting collective bargaining would be to reducing expenditures on public employees. In fact, school districts and local governments could require changes to their employees’ health benefits only if collective bargaining were curtailed.

So on February 28, senate majority leader Scott Fitzgerald drove across southern Wisconsin to meet with two Democrats who wanted to explore a compromise, Bob Jauch and Tim Cullen. Fitzgerald says that the two had opposed the flight to Illinois in the first place and along with at least one other colleague wanted to find a way to return. They explored several options over hotcakes and sausage at a local McDonald’s. Fitzgerald left

without a compromise but with what he believed was a commitment that the Democrats would soon be returning to Madison.

“I met ‘em on a Monday,” Fitzgerald recalls. “They called me on a Tuesday saying they’d be in the chamber Wednesday morning. I called them on Wednesday morning to say, ‘Listen, I know you’re coming back, let me call the cops to give them a heads up that you’ll be back.’ And then Senator Cullen said, ‘Well, Fitz, what I told you the other day was true at the time I said it, but we’re not coming back.’”

Fitzgerald was frustrated and concluded the Democrats were not negotiating in good faith. He called Cullen and told him to deal directly with the governor’s office.

Walker instructed two of his top aides—chief of staff Keith Gilkes and deputy chief of staff Eric Schutt—to pick up negotiations with the Democrats. “There was continued optimism on our side that something would get done,” says a source close to Walker. The governor would not compromise on the two main components of the bill. But he was willing to make some concessions, such as allowing unions to bargain collectively for wages beyond the rate of inflation, as well as for performance bonuses, mandatory overtime, and class size.

The discussions on March 2, again in a McDonald’s, included the two moderate Democrats, the governor’s staff, and, importantly, Mark Miller, the Democratic leader. When the negotiations ended, Republicans once again believed their colleagues would be returning soon. Gilkes woke Walker up with a phone call at 11:45 P.M. on Wednesday to tell him that they had agreed on “the framework for a deal” that would be finalized in the coming days. The talks continued by phone for several days and culminated in a meeting between Gilkes, Schutt, Jauch, and Cullen on Sunday, March 6, in South Beloit.

The talks went well, and Walker was not surprised when the *Wall Street Journal* reported that evening that the Democrats would be coming home. Miller, the Democratic leader, told the

paper: “We are now looking at returning to the state capitol and requiring the senators to take a vote and have them declare who they’re with—the workers or the governor.”

Jauch, as he had done in meetings with Republicans, pointed to the advanced pregnancy of one state senator in Illinois as a factor in the decision to return. “I think we have to realize that there’s only so much we can do as a group to make a stand,” he said. “It’s really up to the public to be engaged in carrying the torch on this issue.”

But as had been the case all week, the moment Republicans thought the homecoming was imminent, the story changed. State senator Chris Larson, a hard-left legislator, posted a message on his Facebook page saying the Democrats were staying away and claiming, implausibly, that the *Journal* had quoted his colleagues out of context.

If there were any question that the deal was dead, the Democratic leader dispelled it by issuing a letter Monday to Walker through the media. His missive called for a meeting near the Illinois-Wisconsin border—an absurd request given the regular negotiations that had been quietly taking place for a week.

“He was trying to frame the debate as if we hadn’t been negotiating,” says one source close to Walker. “We’d been taking hits in the media for refusing to negotiate, and we never went public to push back on that so as to not jeopardize the progress we thought we were making. We knew then that Miller was being disingenuous.”

So Republicans got serious about a GOP-only alternative. After one of the breakdowns in negotiations, a week before, Walker had gone to Republicans in the state senate to gauge their willingness to move forward without the Democrats. They were not interested—yet. Since the earliest days of the standoff, Republicans had been engaged in an informal back-and-forth with lawyers from the state’s legislative fiscal bureau, a nonpartisan agency, about their options. On Monday, they formalized their request: How much of the budget repair bill could be passed without a quorum?



They were thrilled with the response—almost all of it. Despite speculation that employee contributions to benefits (what Walker and his staff called the “5-and-12” provisions) would have to be stripped out, the bureau informed Republicans these could remain—meaning both of the main components of the bill could be passed without Democrats. Two other nonpartisan state agencies agreed, the Legislative Council and the Legislative Reference Bureau. The attorneys insisted that the legislation drop a refinancing provision as well as the sale of state-owned power plants. But most of the bill could be moved. Although the 5-and-12 and collective bargaining provisions would have a fiscal impact, they did not require the state to appropriate any money and thus could be included. “Democrats thought we wouldn’t be able to do the 5-and-12 with collective bargaining,” says Walker.

There was more good luck on Monday. In an interview with radio host Charlie Sykes, Milwaukee mayor Tom Barrett, who had lost the governor’s race to Walker last fall, pushed the Republicans to try to move forward without the Democrats. Barrett, working on the mistaken assumption that the 5-and-12 would require a separate vote, said:

**BARRETT:** You could vote on those without those missing senators. You could vote on those tomorrow morning. You don’t need 20 senators to vote on those changes to the collective bargaining. Again, if someone really wanted to end this standoff, the way you would end it is simply have a separate vote.

**SYKES:** Would you favor that?

**BARRETT:** I would certainly favor that.

So on Wednesday, when Walker spoke to Republicans in the senate, they not only had a legal opinion endorsed by three nonpartisan legal agencies, they also had political cover provided generously, if inadvertently, by the state’s most prominent Democrat.

In a late afternoon vote, senate Republicans passed the tweaked budget repair bill and sent it back to

the assembly, which had passed the original version, for its approval on Thursday.

**D**emocrats were outraged. They claimed that Republicans had broken the state’s Open Meetings law, which states 24 hours’ notice should usually be given before a public meeting. “They violated state law,” huffed Mayor Barrett in a radio interview the next morning. “They operated like this is a banana republic.” “Republicans have made a mockery of democracy,” said Representative Peter Barca, the Democratic leader in the state assembly.

On Thursday, Barca filed a legal challenge, alleging the vote had violated the Open Meetings law. But the case seems to have little chance of succeeding. The senate chief clerk, a nonpartisan official who offers parliamentary and legal advice to the chamber, wrote in an email to senators that the vote “appears to have satisfied the requirements of the rules and statutes.”

Those rules and statutes state that

during a special session, under which the legislature has been operating for the past month, the only notice required is a posting on a bulletin board in the capitol. The Republicans did that. And then, just to be safe, they waited two hours, the minimum notice required under the Open Meetings law when it’s “impractical” to wait for 24 hours.

The absurdity of the Democrats’ outrage was too much. They weren’t merely wrong on a procedural point. They were accusing Republicans of “making a mockery of democracy,” operating like a “banana republic,” and, in former labor secretary Robert Reich’s words, conducting a “coup d’état.” All the while, Democrats were hiding in another state trying to prevent a newly inaugurated senate from holding a vote on vital state business.

But in the end, senate Republicans had found a way to vote. The Assembly passed the bill on Thursday. Scott Walker signed it into law on Friday.

And that is what democracy actually looks like. ♦

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# Roll Jordan Roll

The Ohio Republican wrestles with the budget.

BY FRED BARNES



**T**he Republican Study Committee (RSC) is the most important organization in Washington you've never heard of. Its new leader is a former wrestling champion, and he's one reason its influence is surging.

Jim Jordan, 47, was elected RSC chairman in December after winning his third term in the House of Representatives from northwestern Ohio. He says the RSC's role is simply "to push for conservative things." This means policies—on spending, the deficit, and the national debt

especially—more conservative than those Republican leaders in Congress are inclined to favor.

House leaders scarcely knew what hit them in their first clash with the RSC under Jordan. They had proposed to cut 2011 spending by considerably less than the \$100 billion Republican candidates had talked about in the 2010 campaign. At a meeting of the 241-member Republican conference on February 9, the RSC rebelled.

"This is our first chance to make an impression," Jordan declared, and reneging on a promise would leave the wrong one. Jordan was echoed by RSC members, who also argued for the full

\$100 billion (pro rated to \$61 billion in cuts for the final 7 months of 2011). Six hours later, Republican leaders caved.

"He's a wrestler," a colleague says of Jordan. "He brings that to his politics. He doesn't like to lose." Indeed he doesn't. "Winning the match, winning the game, winning in politics," Jordan says, it's all the same. "Winning is winning."

With Jordan, winning is not just a goal. It's a habit. In high school, he won four straight state championships in different weight classes (98, 105, 112, and 126 pounds) and two NCAA championships at the University of Wisconsin in the 134-pound class. He lost only once in high school (154 wins). In college, his record was 156 wins, 28 losses. Now his physical activity comes from strenuous workouts in the House gym. Meanwhile, his 16-year-old son Isaac recently won the Ohio high school championship at 160 pounds. His son Ben is a star wrestler at Wisconsin.

With his wrestler's attitude, Jordan is intense, focused, and eager to move quickly. At the moment, he is riveted on the spending and debt issue. "It's hard to get his attention on anything else," an adviser says.

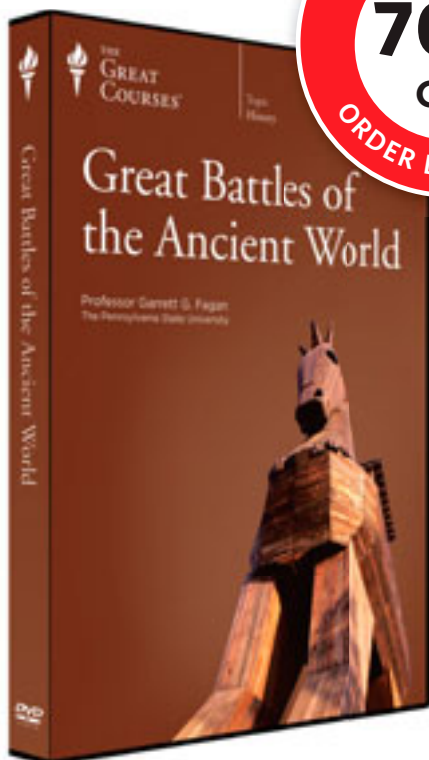
In the past, the RSC was routinely ignored by Republican leaders. When Republicans controlled the House in 2006, before a four-year Democratic interlude, the RSC had 110 members, a sizable nucleus but not enough to have much effect on the Republican agenda.

Then came the 2010 landslide. It sent 87 Republican freshmen to the House, 77 of whom joined the RSC. The group now has 177 members, plus a couple more who belong but are wary of associating their names publicly with the RSC. That's nearly three-fourths of the entire House Republican majority who are RSC members and thus willing to identify themselves as conservatives.

"The freshmen really are the key," Jordan says. They give the organization its numerical clout. And the RSC ties them to Republicans who share their views on fiscal issues and reducing the size of the federal government. Today,

ZACH FRANZEN

*Fred Barnes is executive editor of*  
THE WEEKLY STANDARD.



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with Republicans in the majority, the RSC has become “consequential,” says Representative Tom Price of Georgia, the RSC head from 2008 to 2010.

Price says he and previous leaders—John Shadegg of Arizona, Sue Myrick of North Carolina, Mike Pence of Indiana, Jeb Hensarling of Texas—built the RSC’s foundation. “Jordan built the building,” Price adds.

The organization gets by with a staff of 11. Its executive director, Paul Teller, shares an office with three others in a tiny room no bigger than a closet in the Cannon House Office Building. There’s no place for visitors to sit. Teller usually steps into the hallway when he’s interviewed.

The RSC’s rise in status has been noticed in Washington. Lobbyists drop by, send emails, phone. The staff director of the House Appropriations Committee comes to meetings of staffers of RSC members. The organization is in close touch with anti-tax, pro-life, and other conservative groups active on Capitol Hill. One in particular:

Heritage Action, the new political arm of the Heritage Foundation.

Jordan is preparing for his next fight with Republican leaders on the 2012 budget. To Democrats, Republican ideas for reforming entitlements, Medicare in particular, are radical. “We’re saving it so it doesn’t go bankrupt,” he says. To Jordan, GOP leaders are too cautious. He’s not.

He wants a budget that reaches balance “within the budget window,” or 10 years. Given a \$1.6 trillion deficit in 2011 and huge deficits for years to come, that won’t be easy. Jordan’s budget would make the “Roadmap” of House Budget Committee chairman Paul Ryan look timid in comparison. In fact, that’s one of its aims.

“We need to show the American people we can get to a balanced budget in a reasonable time,” Jordan told me. Ryan’s plan wouldn’t balance the budget until 2063. Jordan would reduce annual spending hikes for Medicare to 4 percent from 7 percent. And he’d replace its unlimited fee-for-service

payments with what he calls “health scholarships” for seniors, allowing them to buy their own insurance.

Jordan wants to cut deeply into social spending. He would take spending on 71 separate federal welfare programs back to 2007 levels. He would require recipients of food stamps or federal housing to work or get job training.

Americans are ready for all this, he says. That’s the message of the 2010 election. “The American people embraced liberty instead of more government,” Jordan says. “No other people on the planet would have made that decision.”

Given this, the Republican strategy is straightforward. Jordan likes to quote Richard Armey, the House majority leader from 1994 to 2002. It goes like this: “When we act like us, we win. When we act like them, we lose.” So the job of Republicans, Jordan says, “is to act like us as much as possible.” That leaves little room for compromise. But wrestlers don’t compromise, do they? ♦

## Progress Denied: How Red Tape Is Costing Jobs

**By Thomas J. Donohue**

**President and CEO  
U.S. Chamber of Commerce**

A combination of federal, state, and local regulatory red tape is preventing American businesses from creating new green energy jobs and generating more than a trillion dollars in economic output. Is that acceptable with 8.9% unemployment and a struggling economy? Or is there a better way?

By our estimates, 351 job-creating projects promoting energy across the country are currently snarled by a broken permitting process and by a regulatory system that fails to ensure timely reviews and actions. (To see what projects are being delayed and denied in your state, go to [www.uschamber.com/pnpstudy](http://www.uschamber.com/pnpstudy).) If allowed to go forward, these projects could produce a \$1.1 trillion short-term boost to the economy and create 1.9 million jobs annually.

The flawed regulatory system is also open to manipulation. Some environmental

activists and their allies—who should be the strongest green energy supporters of all—are using every resource at their disposal to block, delay, or cancel clean energy projects. They have organized local opposition, changed zoning laws, opposed permits, filed lawsuits, and bled projects dry of their financing. Call it “green tape” bureaucracy. Their efforts are undermining job creation and slowing the adoption of environmentally friendly energy technologies.

Lawmakers and the American public must recognize that our broken permitting process and extreme groups are denying projects opportunities to be fairly considered on their merits. To be clear, we are not saying that ill-conceived projects should be allowed to move forward. Rather, all projects should be given a fair chance to prove their worth in the market within a reasonable period of time. And if a project is worthy, it should receive a permit.

The discussion is beginning in Washington about improving the regulatory process. What is urgently needed now is

a careful consideration of how all these permitting obstacles, uncertainties, and time delays can be addressed to speed up the processing, approval decisions, and development of many pending job-creating projects. Private investors and developers are prepared to fund, build, and operate energy projects that could materially increase GDP and create jobs—but only if policymakers remove obstacles.

No one objects to a fair and timely process whereby projects are examined and the affected communities can be heard. But reasonableness and common sense must carry the day. The truth is that it takes too long to build almost anything in our country today—even clean, green, and renewable energy resources that create jobs, enhance our energy security, and improve our environment. It’s time for change.



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# Dark Secrets

The sordid history of Syria's collaboration with Qaddafi. **BY LEE SMITH**

**T**he uprisings sweeping the Middle East have started to blow down some very dark doors—the doors that lead to the dungeons and prisons where Arab security services do their work.

In Alexandria and Cairo, Egyptian protesters broke into the offices of state security, where they discovered some of the tools and torture devices used to make prisoners more pliant. Perhaps more important, they unearthed files detailing the nature of the work, and on whose behalf it was done. When the dust has settled, Washington may find its Arab allies much less willing to chase down and detain terrorist suspects, lest they be accused of collaborating with the Americans.

But what about the dark work Arab regimes do with the aid of other Arab states? Libyan rebels last week reportedly brought down two Syrian fighter pilots flying on behalf of Qaddafi's besieged regime. Arab sources have told me there may be more than two dozen Syrian pilots flying planes in Libya—Qaddafi pays well and Damascus can use the money. Besides, the Syrian-Libyan relationship goes back several decades and the ties between their intelligence services are strong.

Those same sources explain that a delegation from Syrian intelligence services was recently dispatched to Tripoli to scrub the Libyan intelligence archives clean of all the records detailing past projects that the two countries had collaborated on, including terrorism. One Arabic-language website claimed that former Syrian vice president Abdel-Halim Khaddam

was involved in these joint operations, including the “disappearance” of Moussa al-Sadr, the Iranian-born Lebanese cleric who went missing in Libya in 1978 and is presumed to be dead. A discovery that Syria really was complicit in Sadr's death could cause Bashar al-Assad's regime some trouble with Lebanon's Shia community, which revered the cleric. With Syrian officials likely on the verge of being indicted in the assassination of a major Lebanese Sunni figure, the former prime minister Rafik Hariri, Syria can hardly afford to alienate the Shia, the one Lebanese sect still unequivocally supportive of Damascus.

Khaddam sent word from Paris that he had nothing to do with Sadr's death. In Washington I spoke with Bassam Bitar, a Khaddam associate who worked in the Syrian regime at high levels. “Khaddam warned Sadr not to go to Libya,” says Bitar. “Khaddam always thought Qaddafi was crazy and thought something could go wrong, but Sadr went anyway because he needed Qaddafi's money for his projects.”

The point of contention between Qaddafi and Sadr was that the Libyan leader wanted the cleric to use the funds to support the Palestinian resistance against Israel, but Sadr was using it instead to build up the impoverished Shia community in southern Lebanon. “The two started to argue and it got out of hand,” says Bitar. “Qaddafi told his officers to ‘take him away,’ which they interpreted as an order to kill him and his two associates.”

That Qaddafi's court is populated

with men who are likely to interpret the dictator's displeasure as a command to kill says much about the nature of the Libyan regime. When Qaddafi asked the next day where Sadr was and discovered he had been killed, he had his officer killed. “Qaddafi didn't want to have any troubles coming from killing Sadr,” says Bitar. “He called the Syrians in a panic to ask for advice, and it was Damascus that told him to concoct the story that he was last seen leaving Libya for Italy, where he supposedly disappeared.”

Khaddam's man in Washington explains that since the former Syrian vice president was in charge of the Lebanon file until Hafez al-Assad handed it off to his son Bashar, the future president, Khaddam had little to do with Syria and Libya's joint terror operations—like the Lockerbie bombing. It's worth recalling that long before Libyan intelligence officer Abdelbasset

al-Megrahi was found guilty in the 1988 operation that killed 270 people, including 190 Americans, Syria was the prime suspect. There's been plenty of speculation that Damascus was given a free pass when the George H.W. Bush White House wanted Syrian cooperation in Operation Desert Storm and the Madrid peace talks, but Bitar and Khaddam believe that the Syrians worked alongside Libya to bring down Pan Am Flight 103. “The Syrians were handling the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, Ahmed Jibril's group—that's who did it. But I am certain that Megrahi was also a part of it.”

Bitar, who worked at the Syrian embassy in Paris in the '80s when Damascus was running Palestinian terrorist organizations out of the French capital, says that the intelligence officer responsible for liaison work with other clandestine services was Gen. Mohammed Khouly. “He was with air force intelligence and since Hafez was



A poster of Imam Sadr in Beirut

*Lee Smith is a senior editor at THE WEEKLY STANDARD. His book The Strong Horse: Power, Politics, and the Clash of Arab Civilizations (Anchor) has just been published in paperback.*

from the air force that was another reason to trust him. With Bashar all the intelligence outfits are constantly being reshuffled because he doesn't trust any of these people. That's why he's bringing back some of his father's associates, men Hafez totally trusted—like Mohammed Khouly.”

Bitar suspects that it is Khouly who dispatched Syrian intelligence officers to Tripoli to clean the Libyan files. “They don't want to get on the bad side of the Americans.” However, it's difficult to know what sort of extravagant mischief Damascus would have to pull to get on Washington's bad side. Both the Bush and Obama administrations have made a habit of looking the other way when it comes to Syria—whether it's support for Hezbollah and Hamas, or serving as a transit route for foreign fighters on their way into Iraq to kill American soldiers and U.S. allies, Syria has paid no price for its misdeeds. Even reports that Syria has built a second secret nuclear facility, this one on the outskirts of Damascus, have failed to sour a White House that still believes the central issue in the Middle East is the Arab-Israeli peace process. Obama—and probably Obama alone—seems to think that a deal between Damascus and Jerusalem will take the air out of Iran's balloon and calm the region down.

Even so, the furies now coursing the Middle East will not be quelled by a peace process. The real Middle East experts are in the regimes themselves and they know which way the winds are blowing, or else Syrian intelligence would not be cleaning up its files in Libya—they're hedging their bets in the fear that no matter how many pilots they rent out to him, Qaddafi's days may be numbered.

“Khaddam believes it is coming to Syria, too,” says Bitar. Of course, Khaddam in exile has plenty of reason to wish for the downfall of the regime he once worked for and now loathes. The history of collaboration between Syria and Libya shows that the regime in Damascus is apt to be every bit as brutal as Qaddafi's when pushed to the wall, and someday maybe not too far in the future it will be. ♦

# Fiat Money, Fiat Inflation

Why we need a dollar as good as gold.

BY LEWIS E. LEHRMAN



Since the beginning of 2009, oil prices have almost tripled, gasoline prices are up about 50 percent, and basic food prices, such as corn, soybeans, and wheat, have almost doubled around the world. Cotton and copper prices have reached all time highs; major rises in sugar, spice, and wheat prices have been creating food riots in poor countries, where basic goods inflation is rampant. That inflation is in part financed by the flood abroad of excess dollars created over the last couple of years by the Federal Reserve.

Those dollars also made possible the emerging market equity boom of 2009-2010. But foreign authorities are now raising interest rates as growth shifts to the United States and Europe. The years 2011-2012 will witness a Fed-fueled expansion in the United States. Unless there is a major oil spike from here, growth for 2011 in the United States will be above the new consensus

of 3.5 percent—perhaps as high as 5 percent this year, with about 8 percent unemployment at year-end.

At first, the enormous Fed credit creation of 2008-2010 could not be fully absorbed by a U.S. economy in recession. But much of this new Fed credit has flooded stocks, bonds, and commodities. The excess credit went abroad, too, causing a fall in the dollar and creating bull markets and booming economies in the developing world. At the same time, inflation intensified, with riots and political turmoil as a result.

There is little new in this latest postwar boom cycle, associated as it is with the world dollar standard we have been living under since the end of gold convertibility and the Bretton Woods monetary system in 1971. With expansive credit policy and Fed financing of the U.S. government deficit, every boom and bust cycle has been enabled by the Fed. At this moment, we are witnessing in the U.S. equity market, and once again in the decline of the dollar, the predictable effects of

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FROM BESTSELLING AUTHOR, ANTHONY DESTEFANO

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From Bestselling Author, Anthony DeStefano

## THE INVISIBLE WORLD

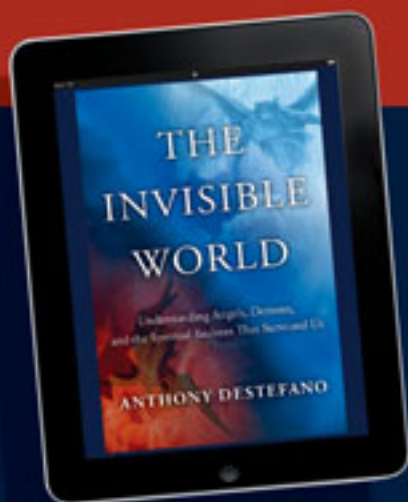
Understanding Angels, Demons  
and the Spiritual Realities that Surround Us

*"Anthony DeStefano brings to life "the hidden world God has created for us," a world that surrounds us but is difficult for even the most convinced Christian to get in touch with, much less the seeker or non-believer. And he does this in a more vivid and realistic way than I would have thought possible. Angels, devils, and grace? DeStefano makes them almost visible. This is a wonderful, compelling book, completely consistent with traditional Christian teaching and common sense — and very, very readable."*



— Fred Barnes  
Executive Editor,  
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Federal Reserve money and credit creation. This latest Fed credit boom has begun with commodity inflation. The extraordinary Treasury deficit, financed by the Fed at home, is financed abroad by the official reserve currency status of the dollar. For example, in addition to the Fed purchases of U.S. government securities, foreign financial authorities have absorbed at least \$4 trillion of U.S. government securities, against which foreign central banks have created their own domestic money. And the U.S. budget deficit can continue to expand so long as there is undisciplined Fed and foreign credit to finance it.

To finance the government deficit, the Treasury now sells bills and bonds at a rate of about \$120 billion a month, or about \$1.5 trillion per year. But this new Fed-created money, which finances the government deficit, is not associated with any production of new goods and services. Thus, total monetary demand, or purchasing power, exceeds the existing supply of goods, equities, and services at prevailing prices, with the predictable result that prices rise. But some of the excess dollars go abroad, creating booms and inflation in emerging markets. As prices rise faster than wages, profits rise. Production increases. A boom is underway.

But it's a boom that turns into a bubble. And there are social effects, not only financial effects. This insidious international monetary and fiscal arrangement has been a primary cause of the increasing inequality of wealth in American society. At home, bankers and speculators have been and are the first in line, along with the Treasury, to get zero interest money and credit from the Fed. They are first to get bailed out. Then with new money, they finance stocks, bonds, and commodities, anticipating, as in the past, a Fed-created boom.

Prices rise first for the most volatile goods, especially stocks, commodities, and financial claims, because they are relatively liquid vehicles for speculators and banks. This is the story of the past two years, with stocks and commodities advancing amidst a sluggish

U.S. economy. This is also the story of postwar Fed-created booms. Each cycle experiences an inflation boom, often in different assets, e.g., Internet stocks in the late '90s and real estate in the last boom and bust.

Inflation at the consumer level has been muted by high unemployment and unused production facilities. But the social effects are already discernible. The near-zero interest rates maintained by the Fed have primarily benefited the large banks and their speculator clients. A nimble financial class, in possession of cheap credit, is able both to enrich itself and to protect itself against inflation.

But middle-income professionals and workers, on salaries and wages, and those on fixed incomes and pensions, are impoverished by the very same inflationary process that subsidizes speculators and bankers. Those on fixed incomes will likely earn very little or even a negative return on their savings. Thus, they save less. New investment then depends increasingly on bank debt, leverage, and speculation. The unequal access to Fed credit was everywhere apparent during the government bailout of favored brokers and bankers in 2008 and 2009, while millions of not so nimble citizens were forced into bankruptcy. This ugly chapter is only the most recent in the book of sixty years of financial disorder.

The inequality of wealth and privilege in American society is intensified by the Fed-induced inflationary process. The subsidized banking and financial community, along with the chaos of floating exchange rates and an overvalued dollar, underwritten by China and other undervalued currencies, has submerged the American manufacturing sector, dependent as it is on goods traded in a competitive world market. In a word, the government deficit and the Federal Reserve work hand in hand, perhaps unintentionally, to undermine the essential equity and comity necessary in a democratic society. Equal opportunity and the harmony of the American community cannot survive perennial inflation.

If the defect is inflation and an

unstable dollar, what is the remedy?

A dollar convertible to gold would provide the necessary discipline to secure the long-term value of middle income savings, to backstop the drive for a balanced budget, and to end the dollar standard and the special access of the government and the financial class to limitless cheap Fed money. And the world trading community would benefit from a common currency, a nonnational, neutral, monetary standard that cannot be manipulated and created at will by the government of any one country.

That is to say, dollar convertibility to gold, a nonnational common currency, should be restored. And dollar convertibility to gold should become a cooperative project of the major powers. This historic common currency of civilization was, during the Industrial Revolution and until recent times, the indispensable guarantee of stable purchasing power, necessary for both long-term savings and long-term investment, not to mention its utility for preserving the long-term purchasing power of working people and pensioners. In a word, the gold standard puts control of the supply of money into the hands of the people, because excess creation of credit and paper money can be redeemed for gold at the fixed statutory price. The monetary authorities are thus required to limit the creation of new credit in order to preserve the legally guaranteed value of the currency.

To accomplish this reform, the United States can lead, first, by announcing future convertibility, on a date certain, of the U.S. dollar, to be defined in statute as a weight unit of gold, as the Constitution suggests; second, by convening a new Bretton Woods conference to establish mutual gold convertibility of the currencies of the major powers.

A dollar as good as gold is the way out. It is the way to restore real American savings and competitiveness. It is the way to restore economic growth and full employment without inflation. It is the way to restore America's financial self-respect, and to regain its needful role as the legitimate and beneficent leader of the world. ♦

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# Lower Education

## *Sex toys and academic freedom at Northwestern*

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BY JOSEPH EPSTEIN

**N**orthwestern University, the school at which I taught for 30 years, has been visited by a delicious little scandal. A tenured professor, teaching a heavily attended undergraduate course on human sexuality, decided to bring in a woman, who, with the aid of what was euphemistically called “a sex toy” (uneuphemistically, it appears to have been an electric dildo), attempted to achieve a climax in the presence of the students. The professor alerted his students about this extraordinary show-and-tell session, and made clear that attendance was voluntary. The standard account has it that 120 or so of the 622 students enrolled in the course showed up. Questions about what they had witnessed, the professor punctiliously noted, would not be on the exam.

The professor, J. Michael Bailey, is a man with a reputation for specializing in the outré. (Northwestern ought perhaps to consider itself fortunate that he didn’t teach a course in Aztec history, or he might have offered a demonstration of human sacrifice.) The word got out about the demonstration he had arranged, journalists quickly got on the case, and Northwestern found itself hugely embarrassed, its officials concerned lest parents think it was offering, at roughly \$45,000 a year, the educational equivalent of a stag party.

The president of Northwestern, a man named Morton Schapiro, issued what might be termed Standard Response #763; every contemporary university president has a thousand or so of these equivocal responses in the kit that comes with the job. This one read:

I have recently learned of the after-class activity associated with Prof. Michael Bailey’s Human Sexuality class, and I am troubled and disappointed by what occurred.

Although the incident took place in an after-class session that students were not required to attend and students were advised in advance, several times, of the explicit nature of the activity, I feel it represented extremely poor judgment on the part of our faculty member. I simply do not believe this was appropriate, necessary or in keeping with Northwestern University’s academic mission.

Northwestern faculty members engage in teaching and research on a wide variety of topics, some of them

controversial. That is the nature of a university. However, in this instance, I have directed that we investigate fully the specifics of this incident, and also clarify what constitutes appropriate pedagogy, both in this instance and in the future.

Many members of the Northwestern community are disturbed by what took place on our campus. So am I.

I have never met President Schapiro, but I have begun to establish a relationship with him. This relationship may be compared to that of a tsetse fly with a white settler in the Congo. As an emeritus faculty member, I have decided, without waiting to be asked, to be a pest. When, for example, a month or so ago it was announced that Northwestern had selected Stephen Colbert for this year’s commencement speaker, I sent President Schapiro the following email:

I was a touch saddened, though not greatly surprised, to discover that you have chosen Stephen Colbert as this year’s commencement speaker. In this you follow the low tradition of choosing commencement speakers from television journalism, show business, and minor celebrity. I know Mr. Colbert is a Northwestern graduate, and I am sure he will prove, in the cant phrase, a fun speaker. But the choice of Stephen Colbert is pure public relations, and not in any way an educational choice. I’m not sure you will grasp this, but I thought it worth mentioning.

President Schapiro wrote back to assure me that he had grasped my meaning and also to predict that the graduating students would arise from Mr. Colbert’s talk “inspired.” I replied, “I’m sure that Stephen Colbert will be every bit as inspiring as Julia Louis-Dreyfus was three or four years ago or as Diane Sawyer will be next year,” and promised not to write to him soon again.

The current scandal over Professor Bailey’s sex demonstration caused me to break my promise. Rosinante to the road again, I mounted my computer and tapped out the following: “I have just read your statement on what we may now term the Michael Bailey Dildo Scandal. I would have liked it a bit better if you’d added a final sentence, which read: ‘And so I have decided to have Professor Bailey castrated, the schmuck deserves no less.’ . . . Isn’t the faculty lots of fun?” President Schapiro, who gets high marks for equanimity, wrote back: “Never a dull moment.” And not many enlightening ones, either, I thought to answer but did not.

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Professor J. Michael Bailey has a sex lab at the university, which turns out to be not at all like Masters and Johnson's lab, set up to do intricate physiological recording—"a blow-by-blow account of the clitoris in action," as one of their critics once described it—but a room with a few computers in it. A somewhat softish-looking man, balding, he was recently photographed in open-necked shirt and jeans (leisure cut, to be sure). But then perhaps a sexologist ought not to be too elegant, or even comely. Mrs. Johnson, of Masters and Johnson sexological fame, looked like nothing so much as a prison matron, and Dr. Masters resembled a little the evil Dr. Sivana in the old Captain Marvel comics. One of the founding fathers of sex studies, Alfred Kinsey, a serious masochist who in his spare time went in for self-circumcision, after a hard day at the office measuring the intensity of male orgasms, used regularly to be seen in Bloomington, Indiana, watering his lawn in a bikini.

On his Northwestern home page, Professor Bailey provides a picture of himself in his high-school graduating class, when he wore his red hair shoulder-length. He lists his favorite albums—"I think you can tell a lot from someone by the kind of music they listen to," he writes—the symphonies of Shostakovich or the Beethoven late quartets not among them. Divorced and the father of a son and daughter, he also offers a picture of his former wife, whom he describes as "a generally cool woman" and Dave, her new husband or boyfriend, it isn't clear which, "who is equally cool." Thanks, professor, for sharing.

Professor Bailey wrote a book called *The Man Who Would Be Queen*, which apparently argues that homosexuality is innate, not the result of nurture, and which caused some controversy among politically minded homosexuals. The section of his book on transgendering especially inflamed transgendered readers, arguing as it did against the standard view that men who wish to cross genders are really the victims of a biological mistake; Bailey's view is that such men are instead motivated by erotic fantasies of themselves as females. The heat he took for this, mostly played out on the Internet, was hot and heavy.

The sex demonstration controversy is not the first to have visited Professor Bailey. Earlier a transgendered woman complained that she had had consensual sex with Bailey after discussions having to do with his research. Two transsexual professors on Northwestern's faculty filed a claim that he, who is not a registered psychologist—where, one wonders, does one go to register?—inappropriately wrote letters evaluating whether candidates were ready for sex-reassignment (happy phrase) surgery. In another instance four women claimed he failed to alert them that he was using discussions with them about their sexuality for a book. In each case, Northwestern concluded that Professor

Bailey either was being harassed or was operating within scientific guidelines or else chose not to press the matter. A man with a penchant for smashing taboos, Professor Bailey enjoys pushing the envelope, but, like many another radical academic, prefers not to pay the postage.

As for the most recent controversy, Professor Bailey's first defense was to go on the offensive. "I think that these after-class events are quite valuable. Why? One reason is that I think it helps us understand sexual diversity." (Ah, diversity, the leading buzzword of the contemporary university.) "Sticks and stones may break your bones," he said, "but watching naked people on stage doing pleasurable things will never hurt you."

"I regret upsetting so many people in this particular manner," he said. "I apologize. . . . In the 18 years I have taught the course, nothing like the demonstration at issue has occurred, and I will allow nothing like it to happen again," he said. Getting in a last shot, though, he added, "Thoughtful discussion of controversial topics is a cornerstone of learning." And for Fox News he noted, "Earlier that day in my lecture I had talked about the attempts to silence sex research, and how this largely reflected sex negativity. . . . I did not wish, and I do not wish, to surrender to sex negativity and fear."

"It's science, pal," Professor Bailey's defense in effect is, "and I am a courageous scientist, out there on the edge, so shut up and pass the K-Y, and grab a handful of Viagra on your way out." Bailey's remarks are the social-scientific equivalent of the old avant-garde blackmail. Bailey would have us know that he is doing edgy science; and the implicit blackmail here is that if we are not with him out there on the edge then we are intellectual philistines, no better than those people who, more than a century ago, attempted to scratch the paint off French Impressionist paintings or broke chairs in anger at the first performance of *Le Sacre du printemps*. Disagree with Professor Bailey's views, in other words, and you are rearguard, a back number, one of those "fools in old style hats and coats, / Who half the time were soppy stern / And half at one another's throats."

What is of interest here is the professor's apparently genuine puzzlement that anything untoward was going on. Was there? Let us assume that human sexuality of the kind on display is a legitimate subject of social-scientific inquiry. The question is, why bring undergraduate students, who are neither scientists nor social scientists, in on the actual research itself? Might the justification be that watching an abnormal woman with the aid of an electrical device attempt orgasm before an audience of young strangers will make the students' own sex lives better? Or was Professor Bailey merely running a sideshow on the wackiness of human nature? Pretty flimsy, in either case.

One wonders if Professor Bailey isn't the heir all-too-apparent of decades of misunderstanding of the meaning of academic freedom. When did this understanding break down? The rough answer is: over many years, though it took its most drastic drop during the 1960s. Academic freedom is that unwritten body of assumptions and unspoken standard of ethics that has implicitly ruled university education from its earliest days. Without going into intricate detail on particulars, it is the freedom that scholars and scientists require if they are to pursue their studies and researches and their obligation to pass on their knowledge through teaching.

In earliest times, academic freedom's greatest opponent was religion, which in the nineteenth century felt its tenets being violated by biblical criticism and by the findings of geology. (Darwin, fortunately, was not attached to a university, nor was the great geologist Charles Lyell, so neither required academic freedom for his researches.) Earlier in the American twentieth century, academics were often under fire for their political opinions and causes they supported outside the classroom. Academic freedom would support a university teacher who thought himself a socialist or pro-union, or held nearly any other view, no matter how far out of the mainstream, so long as he did not argue for it or otherwise inflict his views on students in the classroom.

Northwestern has long boasted a stellar instance of the protection afforded by academic freedom by having on its engineering faculty a man named Arthur R. Butz, the author of *The Hoax of the Twentieth Century: The Case Against the Presumed Extermination of European Jewry*. Butz is an unembarrassed, in fact a rather aggressive, Holocaust denier, but because he doesn't express this view in the classroom, where, as a teacher of electrical engineering, he specializes in things called control system theory and digital signal processing, his job is safe. (In a world where side effects sometimes seem greater than central ones, Butz's position on the Northwestern faculty may even be said to have been good for the Jews. Partly owing to him, wealthy Jewish patrons have installed a Holocaust studies chair at

Northwestern, and other Jewish alumni have set up Jewish centers of study at the school. One can almost hear them muttering, above the scratching of the pen upon their checks, "I'll show that S.O.B. Butz . . .") Meanwhile Butz, through the sufferance of academic freedom, keeps his job, and rightly so.

Academic freedom, though, works two ways. While it protects university teachers from outside forces that would inhibit them, it also sets a standard of conduct on what doesn't deserve to be protected by academic freedom. In "The Demand of the Academic Profession for Academic Freedom," Edward Shils wrote about this subject with great force and subtlety. Along with much else, Shils notes that academic freedom might be rightly abrogated

"from a genuine conviction that [a scholar's or scientist's] research is unacceptable according to strictly intellectual standards," and that "academic freedom is primarily the freedom to do serious academic things without obstructions imposed with other intentions in mind." Academic freedom, as Shils also notes, is a specialized right that is "hedged about by obligations and conditions." Some of these have to do with academic behavior on the job, for not alone in dreams but in freedom begins responsibility.

When I began teaching at Northwestern in 1973,

the smoke had not yet cleared from the student revolution. I recall at the time hearing gossip about a teacher who was sleeping with one of his students, and when I checked with a friend on the faculty, he confirmed that it was likely true. "Do many younger professors sleep with their undergraduate students?" I asked this same friend. "I don't know many who don't" was his rather casual reply.

Does sleeping with one's undergraduate students come under the shield of academic freedom, or was it instead an academic perk, or ought it, again, to be admonished, if not punished by dismissal? Although a youngish bachelor at the time, I eschewed the practice myself, chiefly because I thought sleeping with one's students was poor sportsmanship—fish in a barrel and all that—and my own taste happened to run to grown-up women; I also thought it was, not to put too fine or stuffy a point on it, flat-out wrong. I



*Teacher's aide: the after-class performer with fiancé*

wondered, too, if in its taking unfair advantage—a teacher after all has the power of awarding grades to students—it wasn't an obvious violation of academic freedom, and not merely crummy.

Someone wishing to argue the other way might say that, by the end of the 1960s in America, there were not all that many college girls who could any longer be considered innocent. In these sexual transactions, they might go on to argue, it wasn't always clear who was seducing whom. That such an argument can be made shows how the culture impinges upon the university. In an earlier age, the university preferred to think itself as outside of, and if truth be told superior to, the general culture of the society in which it functioned.

For many people today, the more the culture impinges upon the university the better. From the 1960s and perhaps well before, they longed for the university to reflect the culture by being more open, democratic, multicultural, with-it, relevant. These people have seen their longings come to pass. Pursuing the old ideal of the university existing in splendid isolation, a place for the cultivation of the mind, where scholarship is garnered in tranquility and important scientific research done without the pressures of commerce or government—this ideal, the ideal of Cardinal Newman and Matthew Arnold, is no longer available. “There are no culture wars,” Irving Kristol is reported to have said. “They’re over. We lost.” In those wars, the fall of the university was equivalent to the battle of Aegospotami in the Peloponnesian War: After it, Athens, and American culture, was never the same.

One of the most important things that departed from higher education with the old ideal of the university was intellectual authority. One of the first changes I noticed from my own undergraduate education when I began teaching at Northwestern—and this is certainly not true of Northwestern alone—was all the junky subject matter being taught. Courses in science fiction, in the movies, in contemporary or near contemporary writers already consigned to the third class, along with many courses that sounded more like magazine articles in quite boring magazines. At an earlier time, a powerful department chairman might have put the kibosh on the notion of courses on the Beat Generation or on secondary women writers or on soap opera as drama or on graphic

novels or on videogames for the good reason that such things were insufficiently serious. Not any more. No powerful department chairmen any longer existed—democratic departmental procedures had done them in—nor is there anything like a rough general consensus in the contemporary university about what is serious in the realm of culture and ideas. Who is to say that the films of Steven Spielberg are less important than the plays of Shakespeare, or for that matter that Shakespeare himself wasn't gay and a running dog of capitalism into the bargain?

Nor are there any figures higher up the academic ladder who can be counted upon to call a halt to the nonsense. No provost such as Jacques Barzun at Columbia, no university president such as Robert Hutchins at Chicago, now exists. If one is hard-pressed to name a single university presi-

dent today, it is chiefly because none has much to do with actual education. The last major university president to concern himself with the educational content of his school—with appointments and with what was actually being taught—was John Silber of Boston University, and his efforts were far from appreciated by a large portion of his faculty. The contemporary university president's main tasks now, as every-

one knows, are to siphon off money from the rich and put out little fires with wet public-relations blankets.

Higher education used to be an elite endeavor. The acquisition, in Matthew Arnold's formulation, of “the best which has been thought and said” was what it was supposed to be about. But one has to have the authority to know what really is best, and confidence in the belief that acquiring it is decisive. This, somehow, was lost. And once it was, great subjects in the university curriculum were increasingly replaced by hot ones; just as often, traditional subjects were corrupted by politics in ways that constituted a frontal assault on academic freedom, though not many people in the university seemed either to notice or much to mind.

Not long after I began teaching at Northwestern there arrived in the English department in which I taught a woman teacher committed, in a full-time and lifelong way, to a personal radical political program. She taught literature on strictly Marxist lines and organized a student political group to which she openly recruited students, inviting them to her home for May Day dinners and carefully cultivating them in other ways. (Some of these students appeared in my classes, and a glum and predictably dogmatic lot they were.) Everybody knew about this, but

**Does Professor Bailey, one has to wonder, thrill to his own acts of *épater les bourgeois*? Does he, so to say, get off in his combined role as Pied Piper, Krafft-Ebing, and the Diaghilev of the kinky?**



no one said a word in protest of a teacher proselytizing students for her own political causes. Did they so misconstrue academic freedom, I used to wonder, that they thought telling her to knock it off would interfere with her rights, or were they worried that doing so would seem bad manners?

Things went along in this way for a few years, when the teacher, with her student acolytes, organized a shout down of a Nicaraguan contra speaker visiting the campus. One of her students threw a red liquid—animal blood? nobody knew for certain—at the man. Afterwards, she told a reporter from the *Chicago Tribune* that the speaker had no right to be on campus; that, in fact, he deserved to die. When asked about the freedom of speech, she said that it didn't extend to such a man.

Because of the publicity this response evoked, a faculty committee was formed to investigate the incident and censured her behavior. The censure carried no penalty; quite the reverse, it made her a heroine of sorts on the campus. Eighty-five faculty members, chiefly from the humanities and social sciences, signed a petition protesting the censure. Later she was recommended for tenure by the English department and by a faculty panel and the arts and sciences dean—tenure that was denied only at the very end because the then-provost of the university, an old-fashioned liberal named Ray Mack, said he could not grant tenure to anyone who was on record not believing in free speech in a university. She departed Northwestern for that Valhalla for sixties radical teachers, Rutgers University at Newark, where she remains today.

That so many of the faculty at Northwestern had no qualms about her proselytizing students is noteworthy. But then there is always faculty ready to back up the most egregious behavior of colleagues. In the case of J. Michael Bailey, the *Chronicle of Higher Education* chimed in with an article by an assistant professor of sociology at Middlebury College named Laurie Essig, who finds the Northwestern sex scandal, as we now say, a great teachable moment. Professor Essig is of the view that shaking things up, attacking the status quo, is of the very essence of education, what the whole enterprise is really about.

"Clearly," Essig writes, "this 'live sex act' triggered a national conversation about what we can and cannot look at." She goes on to ask "what is it about the fact that there were people there on the stage that makes it different than a film with a sex scene or a book with a sex scene? . . . Why are we so damn uncomfortable with sex that is not mediated by film or text that ABC, CNN, and all the rest of the media outlets can't stop talking about it?" Essig

even wonders if "the live sex act had occurred between a straight, vanilla, normatively gendered and married couple, would we have cared as much?" She concludes: "These all seem like important questions and questions that can be asked because a professor allowed something to happen in his classroom and triggered a national debate about the dangers of sex and education getting into bed together."

Professor Essig joins Professor Bailey as one of the university's shock troops. A student I talked with, who had earlier taken Bailey's human sexuality course and who did not otherwise speak harshly of him, noted that he seemed more than normally pleased to shock his audience of students. Does Professor Bailey, one has to wonder, thrill to his own acts of *épater les bourgeois*? Does he, so to say, get off in his combined role as Pied Piper, Krafft-Ebing, and the Diaghilev of the kinky?

Because of the great ruckus that his sex demonstration caused, Professor Bailey later allowed that, if he had to make the decision to stage the sex demonstration again, he probably wouldn't do it. But then he remarked: "Those who believe that there was, in fact, a serious problem have had considerable opportunity to explain why: in the numerous media stories on the controversy, or in their various correspondences with me. But they have failed to do so. Saying that the demonstration 'crossed the line,' 'went too far,' 'was inappropriate,' or 'was troubling' conveys disapproval but does not illuminate reasoning."

Allow here a small attempt at illumination. Because a subject exists in the world doesn't mean that universities have to take it up, no matter how edgy it may seem. Let books be written about it, let research be done upon it, if the money to support it can be found, but the nature and quality and even the sociology of sexual conduct—all material available elsewhere in more than plentitude for the truly interested—does not cry out for classroom study. Students don't need universities to learn about varying tastes in sex, or about the mechanics of human sexuality. They don't need it because, first, epistemologically, human sexuality isn't a body of knowledge upon which there is sufficient agreement to constitute reliable conclusions, for nearly everything on the subject is still in the flux of theorizing and speculation; and because, second, given the nature of the subject, it tends to be, as the Bailey case shows, exploitative, coarsening, demeaning, and squalid.

Difficult to understand how an expert in the field such as Professor Bailey missed the obvious analogy, but in the demonstration he arranged for his students the poor woman is little better than a prostitute, the students pathetic johns-voyeurs, and he himself, quite simply, the pimp. A curious role for a university teacher to play, but I guess it's a living. ♦

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# Frenemies of Free Speech

*The damage that benevolent censors do*

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BY SAM SCHULMAN

**T**his weekend is the anniversary of the first truly liberal attempt to prevent hatred by restricting free speech. On March 15, 1939, Denmark made it a criminal act to spread “false rumors or accusations” in order to incite “hatred against a group of the Danish population because of its creed, race, or nationality”—with a fine for those who did so in speech and detention or prison for those who did so in print or broadcasts. The law was designed to hamper the activities of Danish Nazi sympathizers. On May 31 the same year, Denmark made itself even more secure against Nazism by signing a nonaggression pact with Germany. Less than a year later, Hitler initiated the six-hour conquest of Denmark by putting an armored battalion on the regular ferryboat from Rostock to Denmark. The treaty didn’t stop him, nor did the fear of feloniously violating Section 266b of the Danish Penal Code by inciting hatred against Jews and Communists.

The German Army packed its bags in 1945, but Section 266b remains in force, much modernized (it now applies to hatred of any group, not just Danes, and prohibits insults to sexual identity), a standing rebuke to what Europeans call “the American version” of free speech: freedom to speak unconstrained by restrictions against “hate,” against insulting or offending individuals or groups, and without special protection for specific religions (Islam), races, or historical facts. In 2011 so far, American-style free speech has been widely condemned (for the Tucson mass murder, notably), though it has also had moments of popularity, particularly since the Arab revolutions began in Tunisia, and again with the madcap activities of public employee unions in Wisconsin. Even Tom Friedman took a holiday from his admiration for Chinese autocracy to celebrate the Twitter revolutions.

But “the European version” of free speech, if we may call it that, soldiers on doggedly. Courts in Austria,

Denmark, and France have this year convicted journalists and political volunteers (none of them neo-Nazis) of hate-speech crimes, which generally took the form of making observations about the frequency of certain violent crimes among immigrant groups in Denmark and France, and in Austria about the respectability of the historical Muhammad. Fashion designer John Galliano may soon go on trial in France for racial insults uttered in a Paris bar. There is no doubt among European liberals that “hate speech” must remain restricted in this fashion. After all, as a columnist in the Netherlands’ *NRC Handelsblad* explained, “everyone knows it’s wrong to insult someone’s race or religion. So why shouldn’t it be a crime as well?”

A special focus of the war against American-style free speech is the campaign to stigmatize critical discussion of Islam as Islamophobia. Anti-anti-Islamists, as Lee Smith terms Western apologists for Islamism, present a hydra-headed definition of Islamophobic speech. In New York, regarding it as in poor taste to build a mosque on the site of the 9/11 attacks is Islamophobia. In Sweden, Islamophobes betray themselves by suggesting that the suicide bomber who tried to commit mass murder in Stockholm was an Islamist. In Britain, Conservative party chief Baroness Warsi declared that the mark of Islamophobia is to distinguish between moderate and extremist Muslims (a distinction that she is famous for having made herself in a plucky BBC interview filmed just after she was egged by extremist Muslims in November 2009).

The lesson is that believers in free speech should keep their opinions to themselves. Simon Jenkins wrote that freedom of speech itself, not the man who pulled the trigger, was the real culprit in the Tucson murders: “Language that might not disturb a balanced mind” can “clearly stimulate and legitimize an unbalanced one.” Thinking at all about Islam, in its rich variety of cultural and religious expression, is not only an insult, but tantamount to shouting “pedophile” in a playground. As a Norwegian antiterror expert told the press, “Islamophobia leads to discrimination that may lead to terrorism.”

It’s no wonder that so many in Europe believe in the

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*Sam Schulman wrote about Holocaust education in our January 3 issue.*

notion of “good censorship”—and are willing to prescribe it to us. The European chattering classes believe that it is easy to draft sensible limits on free speech in the interest of civility, tolerance, peace, and civilization. And it may seem to the publics in European countries that silencing and even imprisoning a few journalists and center-right politicians will be worth it if it attains social cohesion. They will never really know, since European national publics no longer have the power to decide on such matters—limitations on freedom of expression come increasingly from EU directives and court decisions. But the notion that speech could be limited in a benevolent way has a history that goes back a century before Denmark’s 1939 experiment, and in two little known but dramatic instances failed in ways that are spectacularly ugly—and still have consequences today.

**W**hat did happen when “good censors” went to work in British India and antebellum America? Enormous political impact and dire consequences. These two little-known examples took place almost simultaneously, in the mid-1830s, at opposite ends of the world. And both were attempts to deal responsibly with horribly difficult questions of politics, race, and religion.

In 1837, the great liberal polymath Lord Macaulay and two colleagues in Calcutta drafted an entirely new Penal Code for British India. It was designed to replace at one stroke the existing criminal law, which was largely a hodgepodge of old laws from the previous Mughal regime, and was finally adopted in 1860. Macaulay’s work not only survived the entire period of British rule, but has survived independence to become the penal code of India and Pakistan alike. One section in particular has become a cause of great strife in 21st-century Pakistan: Macaulay’s decision to regulate and criminalize insults to religion became the core of Pakistan’s notorious “blasphemy laws” (which politicians currying favor with religious parties made much more stringent beginning in the 1970s).

In January of this year, Salman Taseer, the governor of Pakistan’s Punjab Province, was assassinated for proposing a humanitarian modification to the blasphemy laws—which might have spared the life of a Christian woman, Aasia Bibi, whose arrest had become an international cause célèbre. Last week, the controversy claimed another victim, Shahbaz Bhatti, the sole Christian member of the government and an advocate of reforming the blasphemy law. He was gunned down while driving in Islamabad. Much of Pakistan’s population, major media figures, and most of the opposition parties celebrated Taseer’s

assassination and made or tolerated threats against anyone who would dare touch the laws. Bhatti knew he was courting his own death by accepting the dare.

Starting in 1835, another group of well-meaning liberals—politicians, intellectuals, and businessmen in Northern states—undertook a campaign against abolitionism in order to placate their Southern political and business partners. Hardly defenders of slavery, these “anti-antislavery agitators” are the true ancestors of the “anti-anti-Communists” of the 1950s and of today’s “anti-anti-Islamists.”

Macaulay was motivated by the need to promote tolerance in a country shared by a few thousand European Christians, millions of Muslims, and, as Macaulay put it, “tens of millions of Hindus strongly attached to doctrines and rites which Christians and Mahomedans join in reprobating.” While Mughal law protected Islam alone against insult (and did so haphazardly), Macaulay’s code gave people of any faith protection from having their “religious feelings” wounded—by words, gestures, trespass, and destruction of property. Macaulay was confident that magistrates would apply the law only to deliberate, malicious, and considered insults—not passing observations or anything said in the heat of religious dispute in defense of one’s own religion. Good jurists would ensure that the subjective impression



*A protest in Paris against a conference on the Islamization of France, December 2010*

of the injured party would never define the crime of blasphemy (which is precisely how the modern-day European hate speech laws do operate).

The American experience was rather more complicated. Antislavery sentiment had been widespread in the South as well as the North as recently as the 1820s, when the South still had hundreds of antislavery committees. Southern authorities cracked down and eliminated these associations, and in 1835 began a concerted campaign on the Northern great and good. The campaign on the part



of what abolitionists later called “the Slave Power” exerted “coercive pressure on freedom of expression in spite of the enshrinement, in the Constitution’s First Amendment, of a foundational right to speak.” It “used legislation and bullying to stifle agitation against the South’s labor regime, portraying debate on the subject as a threat to the Union’s survival. An ideological *cordon sanitaire* was erected along the Mason-Dixon line, but the campaign did not relent at the region’s borders; it extended throughout the country. . . . Although the assault on free speech specifically targeted abolitionist protest, it was meant to have a chilling effect on all discourse,” including “literary and speculative discourse”—and, according to Michael T. Gilmore, author of *The War on Words: Slavery, Race and Free Speech in American Literature*, from which these passages are drawn, it did.

Gilmore’s astonishing book is not history but lit crit, and finds a strong current of self-censorship running through the literature of the 19th century. He argues that the North’s appeasement of the Slave Power up to the eve of the Civil War, and of White Supremacy after Reconstruction, deformed even the greatest writers of the century, from Emerson and Hawthorne to Twain and Howells. (Gilmore’s “Slave Power” theory has been argued by a line of historians which includes Russel B. Nye, Leonard L. Richards, David Grimsted, and Michael Kent Curtis—and disputed by a formidable antagonist, David Brion Davis.)

Gilmore’s argument is *engagé*, and he writes with impeccable bien-pensant convictions. He says that the “perilous state of civil liberties under the Bush administration” helped to inspire *War on Words*, and its title is an homage to Pablo Neruda, the Chilean poet who played Walt Whitman to Stalin’s Lincoln and refused to challenge the Soviet policy of silencing writers like Pasternak and Brodsky. Gilmore’s academic New Left sensibility permits him the radical’s pleasure of admiring energetic and vital slavery supporters like Senator John C. Calhoun of South Carolina and John Randolph of Roanoke, and sharing their contempt for the Northern liberals who tried to appease the South by silencing Northern abolitionists. The list of Northern appeasers includes surprising figures like the Unitarian minister William Ellery Channing, who “attacked abolitionists in graceful language without reading their work,” deploring urbanely how the abolitionists “exaggerated slavery’s evil and painted the master as monster” (in the words of David Grimsted), without bothering to learn very much either about slavery or abolitionism.

**T**he campaign against freedom of speech by Northern antislavery activists began in 1835 with lawfare, violence, and what today would be called BDS: boycotts, divestment, and sanctions. Responding to

Southern pressure, Northern leaders held anti-abolitionist meetings in major cities from Portland, Maine, to Philadelphia; landlords who rented space to abolitionist meetings were boycotted. Pro-slavery mobs supported the lawfare campaign with threats and attacks, culminating in the mob murder of an Illinois editor. Arguably, the first victims of lynchings were not black slaves and freemen but white abolitionists. As a Richmond newspaper observed with contemptuous accuracy in 1836: “Depend upon it—the Northern people will never sacrifice their present lucrative trade with the South, so long as the hanging of a few thousands will prevent it.”

The North bowed to economic pressure and the threat of violence from the South. Without actually legislating against the First Amendment (as many Southern states had done), authorities and civic leaders in the North made speaking out against slavery practically impossible. In 1836, the upstate New York abolitionist Alvan Stewart wrote that an abolitionist is perfectly free to denounce slavery “in the silent chambers of his own heart, but must not discuss it in public, as it may then provoke a syllogism of feathers, or a deduction of tar.”

Southern states were ingenious wagers of lawfare, inventing many devices still used today against freedom of speech in Europe and Canada and advocated by improvers of freedom of speech elsewhere. It was Senator Calhoun, not an anti-imperialist student leader or a Church of England bishop, who argued that speech that hurt feelings should be banned. Anyone who criticized slavery “libeled the South and inflicted emotional injury” and made “reflections injurious to the feelings of himself, and those with whom he was connected” in “highly reprehensible” language. Speaking in favor of the infamous gag rule passed by the House in 1836, which would gut the constitutional right to petition the government if slavery was the subject of the petition, Calhoun (who wanted the same rule in the Senate) denounced hate speech with a passion that any NGO spokesperson might envy. Brandishing a petition that called slaveholders pirates dealing in human flesh, Calhoun denounced its blatant Carolinaphobia: “Strange language! Piracy and butchery? We must not permit those we represent to be thus insulted.”

The war against free speech ebbed and flowed with other issues: the Missouri Compromise and the Kansas-Nebraska Act. But the high water mark came with John Brown’s raid on Harper’s Ferry in October 1859. Harper’s Ferry inspired the Democrats to invent a strategy I wrongly thought Dick Morris had devised in 1995 after the Oklahoma City bombing: blame Republicans for the violent act of a madman with whom they had nothing to do. Illinois senator Stephen A. Douglas put it with a bluntness which anticipates a Paul Krugman column: “The Harper’s Ferry crime was the natural, logical, inevitable result

of the doctrines and the teachings of the Republican Party, as explained and enforced in their platform, their partisan presses, their pamphlets and books, and especially in the speeches of their leaders in and out of Congress.”

John Brown was arrested, interrogated, tried, and executed (in a very efficient six weeks). But this did not satisfy the anti-hate speech crowd. Douglas insisted that those who thought slavery was wrong—and thus had created the atmosphere of violence that stimulated and disturbed Brown’s mind—must “repudiate and denounce the doctrines and teachings which produced the act.”

Three months after Harper’s Ferry, Douglas proposed a new Sedition Law that would not merely ban slaveholder-phobic speech, but criminalize antislavery sentiment.

Douglas’s outrageous Sedition Law proposals provoked Lincoln’s great Cooper Union speech (a speech so grand that Garry Wills thinks it comparable to candidate Obama’s famous Philadelphia speech about race and Reverend Jeremiah Wright). Lincoln described how prudent restraint of speech easily leads to criminalization of thought. What did Douglas want, Lincoln asked? Opponents of slavery must

cease to call slavery wrong, and join [the Southern people] in calling it right. And this must be done thoroughly, done in acts as well as in words. Silence will not be tolerated; we must place ourselves avowedly with them. Senator Douglas’ new sedition law must be enacted and enforced, suppressing all declarations that slavery is wrong, whether made in politics, in presses, in pulpits, or in private. We must arrest and return their fugitive slaves with greedy pleasure. We must pull down our free-state constitutions. The whole atmosphere must be disinfected from all taint of opposition to slavery, before they will cease to believe that all their troubles proceed from us. . . . They will continue to accuse us of *doing*, until we cease *saying*.

**T**he lesson is that when ideas are truly in conflict, the effort to soften the stark disputes by preventing antagonists even from describing their ideas with candor and honesty is hopeless—and makes things worse. The effort to make Northern speech conform to Southern feelings did not succeed—it merely provoked the South and its supporters to raise their standard for civil speech, until speech and the ideas behind it had to conform exactly with their own belief in slavery. Controlling speech did not control the conflict, as the proponents of hate speech believed it would, any more than the Weimar Republic’s constraints on the expression of anti-Semitism prevented the triumph of an anti-Semitic party in Germany—nor, as I argued in these

pages recently, has banning Holocaust denial in Europe eradicated Holocaust denial or promoted philo-Semitism.

The fate of the blasphemy law in Pakistan, designed by a pioneer of modern thought specifically to promote tolerance, is similar. Pakistan’s religious majority has adopted Salman Taseer’s admitted assassin Qadri as a national hero. The Lahore bar, which two years ago engineered the “Black Revolution” that drove President Musharraf from office, showered the killer with flower petals, and—more shocking—offered him free legal representation. Magistrates and



*John Brown under arrest: Stephen Douglas blamed the GOP for his violent raid.*

policemen dealing with him are threatened if they treat him as a suspect. The blasphemy law itself has become an idol. Some Pakistanis argue that reverence for the blasphemy law has enabled one strand of Islam to drive out all others: Although the occasional Christian or Hindu defendant gets the publicity, the overwhelming majority of victims of the extrajudicial punishments that take place in its name are themselves Muslim (like Taseer). As the Pakistani-American writer Omar Ali explains, the blasphemy laws are popular because they give

the message that anything and everything can become blasphemy, and once the accusation is made, the accused is done for. It doesn’t matter what happens in court. . . . Any court that lets off a blasphemer can itself be accused of blasphemy. Anyone who suggests the law is open to misuse is guilty of blasphemy. . . . With this weapon in place, anyone opposing the mullahs and their version of Islam can be accused of blasphemy. The law is there to intimidate and to take away the public space from liberal forces (and not just secular liberal forces, even a mildly liberal interpreter of very orthodox Islam like Javed Ghamdi has had to leave the country).

There is another point to be made here, an embarrassing one. When threatened by violence, cowards (like me) respond by throwing freedom of speech overboard. The South defended slavery with far greater passion and

earnestness than the North disapproved of it. The freedom with which modern Westerners speak of various subjects has a direct relationship to the level of discomfort we feel. A cosmopolitan liberal like Ian Buruma feels perfectly comfortable teasing Ayaan Hirsi Ali about her naïve admiration for the Enlightenment; no one would advise him to give lectures about tolerance to the Islamists who tormented her physically in Africa and threatened her life in Holland. You may recognize Buruma's unpleasantly patronizing tone if you read his spiritual predecessor, William Ellery Channing, urbanely admonishing the abolitionist William Lloyd Garrison about the crudity of his antislavery rhetoric at a time when Garrison's neck was coveted by every lynch-gang on either side of the Mason-Dixon line.

Those in the West who want to limit free speech feel physically safe and morally superior. Professor Talal Asad of CUNY has published a book about the "supposed stand-off between Islam and liberal democratic values" which inquires "into the evaluative frameworks at stake" in understanding the conflict between blasphemy and free speech (*Is Critique Secular? Blasphemy, Injury & Free Speech*). Asad gets Omar Ali's goat, because he is "a Westernized postmodern thinker, safely ensconced in New York and thoroughly immersed in the categories and arguments of the Western academy." Intellectuals in Pakistan who care to inquire into the evaluative framework of the blasphemy regime don't have it so easy. Just after the Taseer assassination, the great physicist and peace advocate Pervez Hoodbhoy appeared on a popular Pakistani talk show, which was taped in front of a college-student audience. Hoodbhoy described the proceedings:

Even as the mullahs frothed and screamed around me (and at me), I managed to say the obvious: that the culture of religious extremism was resulting in a bloodbath in which the majority of victims were Muslims; that non-Muslims were fleeing Pakistan; that the self-appointed "*thaikaydars*" of Islam in Pakistan were deliberately ignoring the case of other Muslim countries like Indonesia which do not have the death penalty for blasphemy; that debating the details of Blasphemy Law 295-C did not constitute blasphemy; that American Muslims were very far from being the objects of persecution; that harping on drone attacks was an irrelevancy to the present discussion on blasphemy.

The response? Not a single clap for me. Thunderous applause whenever my opponents called for death for blasphemers. And loud cheers for Qadri. When I directly addressed Sialvi [a moderate cleric from the Bareilvi sect to which Qadri belongs] and said he had Salman Taseer's blood on his hands, he exclaimed "How I wish I had done it!"

Fear of violence—and the desire to limit violence to those already subject to it—is what really inspires the movement to restrict free speech. If we say nothing, then Islamists will concentrate their efforts on dissenting Muslims like Hirsi Ali; Southern slaveowners will cultivate

their plantations. The *New York Times*'s Robert Wright admits this with admirable candor when he pleads for the suppression of "Islamophobia": "As Islamophobia grows, it alienates Muslims, raising the risk of homegrown terrorism—and homegrown terrorism heightens the Islamophobia, which alienates more Muslims, and so on: a vicious circle that could carry America into the abyss." If only avoiding the abyss were as easy as sustaining abysses in faraway countries. Unfortunately, history shows us the opposite. The efforts of Macaulay and the Northern moderates to avoid offensive speech led inexorably at least to the brink of tyranny, a brink over which many despairing Pakistani moderates think it will lead their country in no more than five or ten years.

Just as bad, these restrictions on free speech exacerbated conflict by forcing antagonists into dishonest positions. Because they were spared disagreement, the members of the injured party became ever more convinced of their righteousness, while those who suppressed the speech of their fellow-believers forgot their own convictions. The faults of each side were amplified, not moderated. Each side knew that the other was lying. Compromise or even peaceful coexistence became less, not more likely.

In suppressing speech, we begin, honestly enough, as cowards, but become falsely convinced of our own virtue. The poststructuralists and the NGOs tell us that through self-censorship of our real beliefs, we become better human beings than we really are. But to those for whose sake we self-censor, we begin to seem even worse than we really are. All censorship—particularly self-censorship driven by fear—creates hatred and contempt for the censors. How can they whose feelings we are trying not to hurt possibly regard us? Certainly as weaklings, but also as weaklings with a secret sense of our own superiority. We cherish our freedoms, but think they are too good for others.

An enthusiastic defender of slavery, John Randolph of Roanoke, showed us exactly how the self-censors deserve to be regarded in a wonderfully contemptuous description of the Northern Democrats who voted for the Southern interest on the Missouri bill of 1820. "They were scared at their own dough faces—we had them! . . . We could have had [any number of] these men, whose conscience, and morality, and religion, extend to thirty-six degrees and thirty minutes north latitude." Restricting free speech is no more than an attempt to draw a new Mason-Dixon line behind which we protect our own political virtue, while withholding it from others. And it will be about as useful a way to create social harmony as Section 266b was at keeping "denigrators of national origins" out of Denmark on April 9, 1940. ♦



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David Horowitz and his security guards, University of California, Berkeley, 2001

# Truth to Power

*David Horowitz vs. the professoriat.* BY PETER WOOD

**W**hy doesn't David Horowitz give up? That question will occur to most readers well before they reach the end of *Reforming Our Universities*. This is a narrative of frustration, disappointment, resurgent optimism, further defeat, and finally the rescuing of small consolation from the wreckage of high hope. For his trouble, Horowitz endures vilification piled on calumny; gets to see his olive branches to the academic left treated as though they were curare-tipped arrows; and secures the support of allies that range from faint-hearted Chihuahuas to politically clueless puppies. So why *doesn't* Horowitz give up? For the publication of this volume is ample proof that he has not; and though Horowitz has much to complain about, *Reforming Our Universi-*

**Reforming Our Universities**  
*The Campaign*  
*for an Academic Bill of Rights*  
by David Horowitz  
Regnery, 256 pp., \$27.95

*ties* seems untouched by self-pity. He has indignation to spare, but the spirit of this narrative of his six-year campaign to persuade American universities to embrace fair-minded intellectual inquiry is the spirit of undaunted determination.

The "Academic Bill of Rights" itself is a 400-word, eight-point list that is so blandly wholesome it could be printed on the side of a grass-fed organic milk carton. Who would really object to universities hiring faculty members "on the basis of their competence and appropriate knowledge in the field of their expertise" (that's article one) or committing themselves not to exclude people on the basis of their "political or religious beliefs" from tenure

and search committees (article two)? Who would think it seriously amiss to declare, as article three does, that students "be graded solely on the basis of their reasoned answers and appropriate knowledge of the subjects and disciplines they study, not on the basis of their political or religious beliefs"? Those aren't rhetorical questions. The American Historical Association adopted a unanimous resolution, on January 9, 2006, condemning "so-called Academic and Student Bills of Rights" on the grounds that they would transfer important academic decisions to "governmental authorities and other agencies . . . violate academic freedom . . . and undermine professional standards." That is a highly imaginative reading of the document that Horowitz was promoting. Of course, the Academic Bill of Rights says nothing about changing the locus of decision-making authority, and it leaves traditional

LONNY SHAVELSON / NEWS.COM

*Peter Wood is president of the National Association of Scholars.*



notions of academic freedom and professional standards intact.

The AHA condemnation was but one cobble in the fusillade. The Modern Languages Association and the American Library Association made similar pronouncements. Other organizations engaged in even greater belligerence: The American Association of University Professors (AAUP) and the American Federation of Teachers undertook what can only be called campaigns of systematic calumny against both Horowitz and the bill, and at the center of these campaigns was the attempt to depict Horowitz as a fabulist and liar who had invented the stories he used to illustrate why students need to have some recourse when their professors substitute ideological indoctrination for disciplined inquiry. Horowitz became vulnerable to this charge because he sought the testimony of students who had had firsthand experience with thuggishly ideological professors. For example, an honors student at Georgia Tech, Ruth Malhotra, suddenly started receiving Fs and was forced to withdraw from a public policy class after she revealed to her professor that she was attending the Conservative Political Action Conference. With Horowitz's help, Malhotra brought her case to the public, and Georgia Tech, which had initially sided with the professor, backed down. The course was reassigned to another instructor, and Malhotra finished it with an A.

That incident stands out because all the people involved were publicly identified. But in other cases, students spoke only on condition that their names and identifying circumstances be kept confidential. A student at the University of Northern Colorado came forward with an account of a criminology professor who gave her a failing grade on a final exam (in 2003) because she refused to answer a question that demanded that she "Explain why President Bush is a war criminal." (She explained, instead, why Saddam Hussein was a war criminal.) As it happens, the name of the professor, Robert Dunkley, eventually came out, and though he had destroyed the exams in question, he recalled that he did ask a question along the lines of: "Make the argument that the military



*Meeting of the Harvard Green Campus Initiative, 2007*

action of the U.S. attacking Iraq was criminal." The details are worth repeating because the incident became the opening wedge in the AAUP's effort to discredit Horowitz. An AAUP member wrote a column in the *Cleveland Plain Dealer* asserting that neither the student nor the professor existed. He characterized the student as "the poster child" for Horowitz's movement, and the claim was quickly echoed by Media Matters for America and *Inside Higher Ed*, where editor Scott Jaschik opined on "The Poster Child Who Can't Be Found." Jaschik's commentary was particularly galling to Horowitz, who reports that the editor "had already investigated the story and knew very well that the student and the professor existed, and that I was the target of a campaign whose sole purpose was to discredit our efforts."

*Reforming Our Universities* is filled with this kind of detail, and Horowitz has the wisdom to report it without much in the way of expostulation. This is a story about the petty lies and misrepresentations on the part of partisans of the academic left. Eventually the attack on the Academic Bill of Rights was probably better known to most academics than the bill itself, and it got the rap of being some kind of trick whereby state legislatures would muscle aside faculties to impose "affirmative

action for conservative Republicans." If this were, indeed, Horowitz's intended trick, he ought to have changed his name to Houdini: There really is no plausible reading of the bill that bears this interpretation.

A document that begins by declaring that no faculty member should be hired, fired, promoted, or granted tenure on the basis of "his or her political or religious beliefs" is simply not a mandate for hiring conservatives or displacing liberals. This does, however, leave a residue of questions. What is so threatening about the bill to left-leaning academics that they would pursue such bitter opposition to a document that mostly recapitulates the abiding principles of the secular research university? Even if they were disposed to attack it out of spite towards its author, why the exceptional vehemence of this campaign? Horowitz ventures his own answer:

The scorched earth campaign against us could be understood only if our opponents felt it necessary to defend the practices—indoctrination and political proselytizing in the classroom—that the Academic Bill of Rights and our campaign were designed to prevent.

In other words, bad faith. Horowitz's opponents never defend those practices openly. Rather, they deny such practices exist and characterize the bill as "a solu-



tion in search of a problem.” The AAUP under its current president, Cary Nelson, has been exceptionally duplicitous in this fashion. Nelson is candid about his Marxist orthodoxy, including his belief that everything is fundamentally political and that there is no reason why the classroom shouldn’t enjoy the benefits of being a stage for progressive activists attempting to win converts to their cause. But this isn’t the AAUP’s argument when it puts on its Sunday clothes and goes over to the statehouse to lobby. In that setting, it is a pious upholder of the divine law of academic freedom.

“Academic freedom,” of course, can mean many things, and the AAUP has been busy in the last few years turning it into a “heads-I-win-tails-you-lose” doctrine. Heads, it is my intellectual freedom to bring politics into the classroom; tails, don’t you dare try to bring your politics into my classroom. Horowitz surely has the right answer here—or, at least, a large part of the right answer. Academic freedom is about searching for the truth, and requires disciplined even-handedness when dealing with matters that “reflect the uncertainty and unsettled character of all human knowledge” in the humanities and social sciences. We achieve that by “providing students with dissenting sources and viewpoints where appropriate.” That’s an eloquent summary of the disinterestedness required of fair-minded teachers, and it is from article four of the Academic Bill of Rights.

Horowitz did, of course, find friends and allies along the way. Legislators in Colorado, Ohio, Pennsylvania, and Georgia took an interest. Some introduced bills that encouraged colleges and universities to adopt Horowitz’s proposal. He also got support from a handful of university officials and trustees around the country, and some support from the leadership of organizations that promote reform in higher education. Steve Balch, chairman of the National Association of Scholars, testified to the Pennsylvania legislature in favor of the bill, but Horowitz registers disappointment with conservatives, libertarians, Republicans, and higher-ed reformers of all stripes. In his view, they have made the case many times over that American

higher education is sunk in a mire of political correctness, but the reformers seem to do little beyond complain and try to fix things at the margins. Why did they make themselves so scarce when a forthright and powerful instrument of reform was put on the table? And for the few who came forward, why were their efforts so faint?

This indictment of the mainstream conservative movement and Republicans is clear-cut: They both essentially ceded higher education to the left and to the teachers’ unions a generation ago, and rarely can work up interest on anything other than the cost of tuition and the mismatch between college credentials and the needs of industry. To be sure, those are important matters in their own right, but by focusing exclusively on them, the right has given enormous power to the left to shape the worldview, the attitudes, the dispositions, and even the ignorance of generations of Americans. David Horowitz is an alarm clock trying to rouse the right from its torpor. He is, however, an alarm clock that will not be heard by some because he is so alarming. His talents

for sharp-eyed observation, pithy pronouncement, and provocative framing make him awkward company. Even people who agree with his ideas shy from being his battle companion, partly for fear of errant missiles but also out of a need to draw their own distinctions and plan their own moves. Of course, Horowitz understands this, more or less, and there are some sad moments here when he acknowledges that he is most successful when he can erase himself from his own projects.

I am persuaded that the Academic Bill of Rights didn’t get a fair hearing, but I am less certain about what comes next. I know a good many of my fellow members of the National Association of Scholars were queasy about it—and probably on the mistaken grounds (incessantly promoted by the AAUP) that it is a call for government control and a demand for the politically motivated hiring of conservative scholars. Even if those misimpressions were cleared away, however, Horowitz and other proponents of the bill would have to find a new point of departure, and I don’t doubt that he has one in mind. ♦



# Cavafy at Random

*The remains (in prose) of the great Greek poet.*

BY JOHN SIMON

Constantine Cavafy is a major figure in modern poetry, repeatedly translated into English. His prose, however, remained uncollected and unpublished in English—until now.

Of course, a good many fine poets have proved no slouches when it came to prose: Baudelaire and Poe, both influences on Cavafy, are prime examples. Yet perhaps the most interesting thing about these 40 short pieces (chosen from 64) is that many of them

*John Simon, author and critic, lives in New York.*

## Selected Prose Works

by Constantine Cavafy  
translated and annotated by Peter Jeffreys  
Michigan, 184 pp., \$24.95

were written in the decent English Cavafy picked up during several years in England. They stem chiefly from his early to early middle years, and only 13 had been published before. They comprise essays, prose poems, what Peter Jeffreys judiciously terms “attempts at short story writing,” articles on the Greek language, and aesthetic reflections. They extend from

Greek folk songs to Shakespeare, from Philostratus to Browning and Tennyson, and touch upon Keats and Wilde, Lucian of Samosata and Leigh Hunt.

Cavafy goes in for lengthy quotations, sometimes dwarfing his own contributions, either out of scrupulous modesty or to spare himself some effort. Curiously, writing on a poem such as “The Glove,” he merely paraphrases Schiller’s original, quotes the English of Hunt in full, and concentrates on the extended Browning version. The problem that affected so much of Greek literature concerned Cavafy in Alexandria relatively



Cavafy in 1901

little: Was one to write in *katharevousa*, the stiffly purist, or *dimotiki*, the spoken Greek? The latter won out, but Cavafy himself, though slowly gravitating toward the demotic, eventually coined his own hybrid language. Of course, this does not come across in translation.

Jeffreys has divided the material into four categories: Essays, Fiction and Creative Writing, Literary Reflections, and Miscellaneous. There are political subjects, such as two pieces arguing for the return of the Elgin Marbles to Greece, and one on the unhappily divided island of Cyprus. There are historical items, such as “Greek Scholars in Roman Houses” and “A Page of Trojan History,” as well as curiosities, such as “Fragment on Lycanthropy” and “Coral from a Mythological Perspective.” Linguis-

tics figure in “Professor Blackie on the Modern Greek Language” and “A Note on Obsolete Words.” More or less disguised autobiography appears in “Musings of an Aging Artist” (written when Cavafy was somewhere in his thirties) and “On the Poet C. P. Cavafy,” which Jeffries describes as “a French auto-encomium that was written by Cavafy but meant to be anonymous.”

Further pieces are about the folklore of enchanted animals and about misplaced tenderness to animals. There is an essay in favor of a student anthology of demotic songs, and one in praise of Saint Simeon the Stylite. There are several on literature, ranging from the Byzantine poets (one more obscure than the next) to the anonymous *Chronicle of Morea*. “Persian Manners” ends this way: “Cyrus the Elder boasted, at the court of his grandfather Astyages, that his father never drank more wine than was needful to allay his thirst; and Herodotus tells us that they never adopt a resolution decided upon when drinking unless it be first approved in their hours of soberness.” One of the longer items, on the last days of Odysseus, examines the ultimate destiny of that hero as variously imagined by Homer, Dante, and Tennyson. This, characteristically, offers almost more quotations from those poets than original observations by Cavafy.

Yet little gems pop up throughout. About the British editor James Knowles, who argues against the restitution of the Elgin Marbles, he offers this: “He appears to be thoroughly convinced, which is not unimportant—it being thus certain that his doctrine has at least one follower.” Or this, more doubtful one, about Keats: “He writes in heroic couplets, though his rhyme is not always rich since in the English language a satisfying end-rhyme is a glory seldom achieved by the poets.” He writes that the waves of the Bosphorus “are unlike those of other bodies of water which resemble the expression of a malevolent or aging face. When the Bosphorus loses its smoothness and becomes rippled, it is simply because it rejoices and is laughing.” And there is this observation:

The Enthusiasm and Creativity of every author begin to appear strange or ridiculous once they age forty or fifty years. Perhaps—and this is one hope—they will cease being strange or ridiculous once they age one hundred-and-fifty or two hundred years—when, instead of being *démotés*, they become ancient.

I cherish a passage against the popular notion of having to write from experience: “Perhaps Shakespeare had never been jealous in his life, so he ought not to have written *Othello*; perhaps he was never seriously melancholy, so he ought not to have written *Hamlet*; he never



Cavafy in 1932

murdered, so he ought not to have written *Macbeth*!!!” Or this, in defense of archaism: “It is not a corpse disinterred (as with less skillful writers) but a beautiful body awaked from a long & refreshing sleep.”

Let us consider one of the better entries in detail. The piece is “A Few Pages on the Sophists” and begins, “I have great sympathy for the much despised Sophists of the ancient world.” Cavafy had read George Grote’s *History of Greece*, which defended the first generation of Sophists, the ones Socrates and Plato had it in for. Now he undertakes to defend a later Sophist generation, the one recorded in Philostratus’ *The Lives of the Sophists*. Young, impecunious Cavafy looked back at these somewhat dubious aesthetes as favorite fantasy

figures: “They greatly resembled today’s artists in their love for the external beauty of the works of art.” Even if they spoke of small things, the outward rhetorical expression had to be perfect. The idealization, both Philostratus’ and Cavafy’s, is evident: “Even those Romans who did not know Greek, listened with fascination to tones of voice, expressive glances, rhythms of speech. One Sophist says of another, ‘he introduced into his speech rhythms more varied than those of the flute or lyre.’”

They were even drama critics, interrupting an actor onstage if he did something wrong: “They would speak on all subjects, historical, social, philological and philosophical. The great variety of their topics allowed their art to encompass components of today’s novels, poetry, criticism, and drama. They concerned themselves with the study of painting and sculpture.” On and on goes Cavafy’s rapture, some of it based on Philostratus, some of it generated by himself. He cites sundry examples of the luxuries in clothing, carriages, domestic animals, and various “earthly goods” the Sophists indulged themselves in:

They were the votaries of the Beautiful in the realm of ideas—but they appreciated the good things of everyday life. . . . Some of their homes even had theatres with excellent scenery built within. . . . Proclus had four homes. . . . But let no one think that in the acquisition of wealth they were petty and avaricious. Artists have their faults, but the two aforementioned were not among theirs.

“Perhaps in their judgments [the Sophists] were mistaken,” we read, “but their sincerity is beyond a doubt when they referred to one another as ‘kings of the spoken word’ and ‘the Greek language.’ Some readers detect irony here; I don’t.” Cavafy retells the anecdote of the Sophist Alexander of Seleucia who, arriving in Athens for “a rhetorical performance,” found most young potential auditors staying with Herodes at Marathon. So he writes Herodes asking for an audience of Greeks, and the great man,

“with much wit, announced that, along with the Greeks, he would be coming as well.”

Notice that questionable “wit.” These prose pieces later inspired Cavafy’s poetry, and in the poem “Herodes Atticus” (where the anecdote is retold) the statement is described as “tactful.” Could that be ironic? Irony surfaces here when Cavafy mentions the loss of numerous works by Sophists: “But this is no reason to suppose with certainty that they were without merit or inferior to those that survived. It is not in good taste to condemn those who are deceased.” Their fateful lapse into oblivion he explains in this way: “Since they were so vocal, since they spoke so much, since they lived the high life.”

He concludes that the Sophists deserve better, that besides everything else, “their worshiping of Art (which should endear them greatly to those of us who presently occupy ourselves with the Word), this bad luck of theirs, this silence which Fate has imposed on them—how unbearable it is to be in such shadows—obliges us to become indulgent and sympathetic.” The reader will note from this that Cavafy was quite a rhetorician himself, and that this *pro domo* defense of the dubious Sophists is meant to justify his own aestheticism connected with homosexuality. This becomes clear in the later poem “Young Men of Sidon (A.D. 400),” where he summons up a group of passionate young men listening to an actor brought in to entertain them: *The room opened out on the garden, / and a delicate odor of flowers / mingled with the scent / of the five perfumed young Sidonians.* A similar group of young men, in the poem “Herodis Attikos,” training as future orators, discuss “their exquisite love affairs” at “their choice banquets,” when the talk is not “about fine sophistry.” They ponder approvingly the fate of Herodis, the honors given him, and the uncritical following he enjoyed from Greek youths. So, in some ways, Cavafy’s prose and poetry go hand in hand.

But this prose piece is particularly interesting as disguised autobiography—or rather, wishful autobiography. So, for example, in the conclusion about the Sophists’ present dismissal and neglect, “how unbearable it is to be in such shadows,” clearly a plea for oneself. As a survey of Cavafy’s ideas, however, the ten-page “Twenty-Seven Notes on Poetics and Ethics” is of supreme value. It constitutes a sort of philosophical diary across the years, and is worth greater attention than the few excerpts I can quote here. We begin with bravado: “I feel an exceptional ability within me, I have the confidence that if I wished, I could have become a great doctor or a lawyer or an economist or even an engineer.” Noteworthy are the epigrammatic insights. Take this aphorism: “Do Truth and Falsehood exist? Or is it only the New and the Old that exist—with Falsehood merely being the old age of Truth?” Or this highly autobiographical reflection: “I do not know if perversion gives strength. Sometimes I think so. But it is certainly the source of grandeur.” Or consider this fragment of self-criticism: “I realize that I am a coward and cannot act. This is why I only speak. But I do not think that my words are redundant. Someone else will act. But my many words—my own, the coward’s—will make his actions easier. They pave the way.”

There are shrewd generalizations—“For me, that which makes English literature cold . . . is the difficulty—or the unwillingness—to stray from the established, and the fear of offending morality, the pseudo-morality, since that is what we should call a morality that feigns naïveté”—and he goes on to praise French books, “both good and bad,” for considering the new, or seemingly new, phase of eros. What a shame, he writes elsewhere, that “circumstances forced [him] to labor greatly to master the English language.” Had it been French, he could have expressed himself more freely! And is he not charming when he writes “how unfair for me to be such a genius and to be neither renowned nor compensated”? ♦



# Write If You Must

*How to tell anything that must be told.*

BY DIANE SCHARPER

Jean-Dominique Bauby, the French editor of *Elle*, suffered a massive stroke and could move only his left eyelid. Yet so great was his desire to tell his story that he dictated a memoir by moving his eyelid to signal individual letters of the alphabet to his secretary. Bauby's *The Diving Bell and the Butterfly* (later made into a movie) testifies to one man's persistence. It also exemplifies man's innate need to tell stories.

Stories are indispensable to our being, insists Roger Rosenblatt, who includes the account of Bauby's efforts here. *Unless It Moves the Human Heart* is not so much a writing handbook as a meditation on why we need stories, and how to write a good one. People think of themselves as rational animals, Rosenblatt says; but given the senseless things that most of us do, he isn't sure that we're necessarily so rational. He is sure, however, that we are wired for narrative. Humans love stories and have listened to or invented them from their earliest days, and because of the importance of stories, we need "those self-elected few who are the chief storytellers and keep the race alive and kicking."

Rosenblatt wants to help those self-elected few improve, and having spent 40-plus years teaching writing, he knows his subject. Does the world need another treatise on writing? The market is glutted with modern classics: *On Writing Well* by William Zinsser, *Bird By Bird* by Anne Lamott, *The Writing Life* by Annie Dillard, and the

perennial favorite, Strunk and White's *Elements of Style*. Perhaps anticipating objections, Rosenblatt seeks to carve his own niche, and for this book he reconstructs individual classes with graduate students studying in SUNY Stony Brook's MFA program. Each chapter contains details of time, place, and people. The author notes the green "blackboard" and describes

the placement of the windows with the winter, then spring, sun lighting the room. He names his students, provides some background information, and shows their positions as they sit facing each other at a rectangular table.

The course, entitled "Writing Everything," focuses on short stories, essays (which he calls the story of an idea), and poems (the story of an emotion). He includes discussions of classics, such as James Joyce's "Clay," writing workshops, student questions and comments (some cogent, others inane), as well as his own observations about "the craft and art of writing." Always insightful, such observations sometimes border on the mystical, as when Rosenblatt muses on the mystery of good teaching or the power of a classic story, or on great writers who "consult[ed] their souls before their pens touched paper." His warm style and careful writing generally succeed, but it's sometimes hard to care about a group of individuals one has never met—even with the author's best efforts to bring these students to life.

Yet here is helpful advice on almost everything from finding an agent (they are indispensable) to the importance of a good editor ("they will tell you what you meant to say"). Rosenblatt

discusses writing ledes and how most student writers suffer from "bouts of throat-clearing—overwriting and hesitating at the beginning of a piece" instead of starting with information that will propel the story (and readers) forward. Grab them right away, Rosenblatt insists: "[T]ell them that nothing in their lives matters as much as listening to your story." There are even cures for writer's block: Drink coffee, paddle a kayak, ride a bike, do something "outside yourself," and then a thought—a word—will arrive and get you started. Some observations are practical—prefer clean, clear sentences that rely on nouns and verbs—and others are very nearly poetic: "[I]n fiction you treat facts differently. You dream into them and make them works of art." In a final letter to students, Rosenblatt summarizes his lessons and, invoking A.D. Hope, speaks of writing as religion: "Nothing you write will matter unless it moves the human heart."

Rosenblatt directs most of his advice to students, but offers insights to instructors as well. Make sure your ideas about writing don't harden into orthodoxy. Be creative; don't stick with a preordained lesson plan. Go with the student's needs. Locking yourself into set patterns would be foolish, misleading, and boring: "There is no point to a writing course if the students do not write better at the end of it than they did at the beginning." Such advice seems obvious, and probably is; but the message, often lost in the crush of syllabi, students, assignments, grades, deadlines, and portfolios, is essential and ought to be posted in every English department in the land.

Rosenblatt's job is not to teach students how to become professional writers, which cannot be done, but to teach students how to improve their writing. He wants students to find their own "vision" and helps by pointing out "revelatory moments" in their work, and how to find such moments for themselves. When they learn to do this, he explains in this wise, unassuming little volume, they will "string the moments together sentence after sentence, and will begin to feel the shaky exhilaration of being a writer." ♦

**Unless It Moves  
the Human Heart**  
*The Craft and Art of Writing*  
by Roger Rosenblatt  
Ecco, 176 pp., \$13.99

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# Puttin' on the Blitz

*The Bright Young Things dress up  
for the Good Old Days.* BY SARA LODGE



*Blitz Party*

*London*

If the past is another country, then it's a land where many British people choose to spend the weekend.

It may not have the best food, but the clothes and the hairstyles are more glamorous; the dances are livelier; and flirting is conducted in a more heroic manner. Escaping to the 1920s, or the 1940s, or the '50s, has never been more popular. And perhaps surprisingly, it is not primarily the older generation who thrill to the call of the Charleston, the Jitterbug, and the Lindy Hop. Young people in London are flocking to elaborate, ticketed events that require them to dress up in boaters and cravats, trilbies and ties, or

Hawaiian shirts and blue suede shoes.

The Chap Olympiad, a daylong summer extravaganza in Bedford Square, is the strangest of these voyages into vintage fashion. Bedford Square is a private park surrounded by 18th-century townhouses but adjoining Tottenham Court Road, a street of cheap electronic goods and gadgets. The Chap Olympiad sets out to defy the tawdriness of the modern world by encouraging its participants to wear tweed, wax their mustaches, and polish their brogues—supposing, of course, that they are unfortunate enough not to have butlers to perform the last task for them.

When I arrived, Bedford Square was pervaded by the old-fashioned aroma of pipe tobacco: Never have I encountered more Old Shag in one place. The sun-dappled lawns were scattered with couples so impeccably turned out in a

variety of vintage styles—hats, parasols, smoking jackets, seamed stockings—that they might have strayed from a film set. My own attempts at vintage dress were perfunctory, and I fear that not only the exquisite dandies sitting under the plane trees but even the dogs, one of whom was wearing a public-school tie, were looking at me as if I had let the side down.

*The Chap* is a niche magazine, founded 12 years ago and ostensibly aimed at “gentlemen,” like Bertie Wooster in the P.G. Wodehouse novels, who sport plus-fours and Argyle socks, and care much more about the importance of raising their hat to members of the fair sex than they do about computers, cars, and chain stores. Such men may now exist only in the well-thumbed pages of the British imagination, but the Chap Olympiad allows the nostalgic of both sexes to celebrate the sartorial pleasures of a more gentlemanly era (1910-40), to drink jugs of Pimms No. 1 Cocktail, and to waltz in the twilight as if hip-hop was just a pet rabbit and Britain still called a quarter of the globe her own.

What is intriguing, however, about the gathering is the degree of irony that infuses its rose-tinted romance with history. People take their appearance seriously. Yet the spirit of the day is one of licensed silliness. Many of the mustaches are obviously, riotously fake. And the “Olympiad” itself consists of a series of competitive events, presided over by a ringmaster in a red tailcoat and black top hat, that include the Hop, Skip, and Gin and Tonic, Umbrella Jousting, the Cadathon, and the Mustache Tug of War.

In the Hop, Skip, and Gin and Tonic, male and female chaps perform a hop, skip, and jump while holding a pint glass brimful of gin and tonic. They must attempt, in the course of their exertions, to spill *not a single drop* of their apéritif. Different chaps took different approaches to this tricky task. Some manfully sprang across the raised platform, while their cocktail sprayed the rapt audience with juniper-flavored droplets. Others successfully cheated. One got his “butler” to hop, skip, and jump, while his master held the drink

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ALL PHOTOS: SARA LODGE

safely out of harm's way, raised it, and then downed it to admiring applause. In the jousting competition, chaps riding old-fashioned bicycles and carrying shields made of reinforced copies of the *Daily Telegraph* attempted to knock one another off their perches with a furred umbrella. In the Cadathon, each male competitor, pretending to be a cad, had to insult a woman in archaic, inventive terms: The woman would respond by giving his cheek a slap.

In each of these odd games, style was the mettle being tested. It was not a matter of what you did, but how you did it. Winning was beside the point. Indeed, to care much about winning would be to be deficient in style. You sense that, for the British, a large part of the attraction of the imaginary past is that it softens the edges of cutthroat modern life. It is a place where play, not prowess, is rewarded. Oddly, people can be themselves more freely when they are openly pretending to be what they are not than when they face the real-world pressure to perform roles they don't control or enjoy.

*The Chap* has a political side. The magazine has organized various protests against aspects of the modern world. When a contemporary sculpture by Rachel Whiteread was exhibited in the Victoria and Albert Museum—normally reserved for older artworks—a group of chaps, dressed in vintage clothing, mounted the offending installation and sat calmly at the apex, smoking their pipes, until they were ejected by security guards. On another occasion, chaps in vintage dress walked down Oxford Street entering chain outlets like McDonald's and Starbucks and demanding deviled kidneys and Darjeeling tea. Chaps, it seems, object to the monotony of modernity, its tendency to spawn global companies that supply identical products. A return to the past, then, is an assertion of individualism in the face of corporate sameness.

Elsewhere in London, retrochic is providing large-scale business oppor-

tunities. The Blitz Party is a ticketed event regularly attended by over 800 partygoers. Reliving the spirit of London during wartime bombing by the Germans, they dress in 1940s costume and gather in an enormous bomb shelter in the East End to dance to swing bands, drink Gin Fizz, and eat Scotch eggs and doorstep sandwiches.



*Chap Olympiad*

I was determined, before attending the Blitz Party, to retrofit my appearance. So I visited one of several hairdressers now specializing in vintage styles. Miss Betty, whose salon, Hell's a Poppin, is off Carnaby Street, came from France a couple of years ago to supply Londoners with everything from beehives to Betty Boop bobs. The salon is a splendid den of red velvet and leather; 1940s and '50s rockers and film stars adorn the walls. On the mirrored dressing table before me was a bedside lamp in the form of two stockinged legs kicking suggestively

upwards, on one of which balanced a leopard-skin lampshade.

While you are waiting, you can read the tattoos on the staff. Miss Betty told me, as she wielded her tongs and rollers, that although many women come here for a party look, others choose to live in 1940s fashion all the time. The air was full of sculptural levels of hairspray. Any houseflies on the premises must be permanently arrested in midair. My own hairstyle, when I finally ventured outdoors, consisted of tight curls fixed around my neck by a latticework of 46 hair grips. I felt like a cross between Princess Leia and a pin cushion. Indeed, I bore a certain resemblance to the mother of Britain's current queen: "You'd look good on a stamp," my partner said doubtfully.

That evening, we stepped into the bomb shelter in Shoreditch to find it heaving with *faux* bomber pilots, army officers and WRENS, Land Girls and gaiety girls. There was even a stray member of the Luftwaffe, who had presumably been taken prisoner en route by the lady on his arm. The bar was bolstered with sandbags and forties advertisements for Corn Flakes, Oxo, and Blackcurrant Pastilles. A ration book menu offered Spitfire ale at £3½ and cocktails such as a Ginger Daisy for £6½. A band at the end of the hall played "In the Mood" and "Angel Eyes," but the hall was so packed that there was little room to dance. Most people seemed to be chatting and enjoying the spectacle. There was a mini Blitz of competing camera flashes.

I asked one gentleman, in naval attire and carrying his gas mask in a brown paper package slung over one shoulder, what had brought him here. He told me that his 96-year-old grandfather had been a quality controller who checked the altimeters in Hurricane and Spitfire aeroplanes where they were assembled in Birmingham. At night he worked as a volunteer firewatcher.

"We don't have that community spirit now," he explained. "We all work hard, but you can't imagine what it was like





*Chap Olympiad*

to emerge from a night shift, find the front of your building blocked by bomb rubble, and clear it away immediately so that the day shift could begin work. People didn't put themselves first."

I hadn't imagined that people would be using the Blitz Party as a vehicle for remembering (and even honoring) the personal past, but I was surprised by how many people had begun the event by speaking to, or about, relatives who were involved in World War II. A twentysomething Australian girl told me that her grandmother had been a London firefighter during the war. She had friends from India and Britain who also had grandparents who were involved in the civilian war effort.

"There's nothing that defines our

generation," she told me. "No big event. I mean, there's 9/11, but that was different. World War II was the last time we were united by a common cause."

The company was diverse. Connie, a transgendered person, was there sporting scarlet lipstick and a fascinator with a spotted net veil. She told me that she and her party all worked in museums and galleries, where the kind of textiles they were wearing were objects labeled and locked up. This was an opportunity to enter the world they usually kept behind glass.

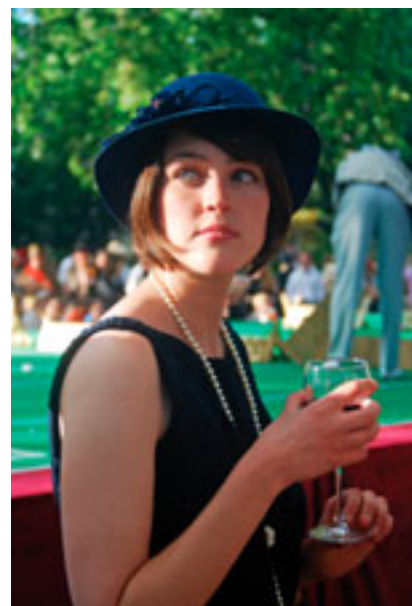
"Besides," she said, "you know in the morning it's usually just powder and a bit of lipstick. You don't take the trouble. It's good to have an excuse to make the effort." I heard this senti-

ment from many people. Entering the past seems to give people a sense of having more time, or measuring time differently. Women who usually dress in sweaters and jeans find hours to don stockings and petticoats. Men who usually zip their trousers and zap their remotes enjoy the gallantry of buttoned blazers and a slow dance.

Of course, the Blitz wasn't really like this. It was a time of fear and exhaustion. Henry Moore's sketches of Underground stations at the time show anonymous bodies, huddled together like the chrysalises of caterpillars, waiting to emerge into the light. But 70 years on, World War II has become a period of imagined glamor.

Every generation creates its own myth of yesteryear. The Victorians dressed up in medieval costume. The Teddy Boys of the 1950s were reviving Edwardian style. The past we visit is always a country of our own making, a holiday destination that reflects what it is about home we wish to escape. In London in the early 21st century, cloned chain stores, the hectic speed of modern life, the absence of community, leave people wanting yore. Luckily, with a wave of the mascara wand, a cloche, a dropped-waist gown, and a click of the heels on a pair of ruby slippers, you can easily transport yourself to a more congenial era.

The yen for then is very now. ♦





# Program for Love

*It's not the usual obstacle in the way of romance.*

BY JOHN PODHORETZ

**T**he *Adjustment Bureau* is the most surprising movie I've seen in ages, a full-fledged, unabashed, swoony romance in the guise of a paranoid science-fiction thriller. Every romance is about a couple meant to be together that must navigate and overcome the obstacles the movie strews in their path. *The Adjustment Bureau* turns this on its head.

It's a movie about two people who are *not* supposed to be together. The force pulling Matt Damon and Emily Blunt apart isn't family, or career, or an inconvenient partner. It's *God*. God Himself doesn't want them to be together. How can two people overcome that? And should they?

The writer-director George Nolfi never quite figures out an answer to those questions, but it was very clever of him to set up the movie in this way. For one thing, it obliges him to create an immensely attractive and likable couple for whom the audience can begin to root almost from the moment they lock eyes on each other. It's no small achievement that he succeeds in this task better than any American has since the heyday of Nora Ephron, and without Meg Ryan or Tom Hanks in the roles.

That's not just a matter of casting—although an inspired Nolfi did cast the two lead roles with Matt Damon and Emily Blunt, who between them have twice as much charm and charisma as would be needed to harmonize the spheres. What Nolfi forced upon himself was a difficult storytell-

ing challenge, and he rose to it with an entrancing portrait of a couple magnetically attracted to each other, even though they are literally not supposed to be.

Entrancing is—surprise again—exactly the word to describe *The Adjustment Bureau* for most of its running time. There's something blissed-out about it. The movie owes a lot to Wim Wenders's

ridiculously pretentious but beautifully photographed *Wings of Desire*, about an angel who falls in love with a suicidal Berliner he is supposed to be watching over. (It was remade, unpretentiously but drippily, with the self-same Meg Ryan, as *City of Angels*.) *Wings of Desire* turned Berlin into a black-and-white fantasia. *The Adjustment Bureau* is set in an entirely realistic yet simultaneously otherworldly Manhattan, which master cinematographer John Toll casts in glistening gray shadow unless the lovers are together, in which case the city glitters and glows.

The angels here aren't the loving and empathic creatures from *Wings of Desire*; they are 1960s organization men who work in the Chrysler Building and have standard-issue names like Richardson and Donaldson and Thompson. They have no interest in the feelings and wishes of their charges; their role is to make sure the universal plan designed by "the Chairman" goes as designed, and to get ahead as best they can. They don't mean ill, but they don't mean well, either, except maybe for one very tired immortal who throws off the universal plan by falling asleep on a park bench.

## The Adjustment Bureau

Directed by George Nolfi



This is the sole detail that survives from the Philip K. Dick story from which *The Adjustment Bureau* derives. Dick, the paranoid schizophrenic whose strange and peerless talent it was to capture with crystalline clarity the worldview of a paranoid schizophrenic, imagined an ordinary man who literally sees reality melting away because a dog barks at the wrong time. He discovers that reality itself is a falsehood, and must then live out the rest of his middle-class days with that knowledge.

Nolfi's hero isn't a passive ordinary man. He is David Norris (Damon), the youngest elected member of Congress—a natural leader and compelling speaker who has an odd tendency to let loose and act on crazy impulse. He sabotages his own rising career through antics like getting into bar brawls and behaving inappropriately at college reunions. He is at low ebb when he encounters Elise (Blunt) in an empty men's room at the Waldorf-Astoria. The scene between them is a triumph, and if the entire movie had been at its level, it would have been a classic.

It's not, because Nolfi can't figure his way out of the box he's created. He gracefully sidesteps the sci-fi argle-bargle of *The Matrix* by making David's discovery that everybody is being manipulated seem like no big deal. He is so headstrong he doesn't really care that he's been shown the truth behind the curtain; he's got his own plans and he's going to carry them out. But the only way David can do that is through careless plotting and Swiss-cheese storytelling. He seems able to fake out omnipotence, and even in the movie's own terms, that doesn't seem plausible or possible.

And yet *The Adjustment Bureau* is worth the trip, if only for Matt Damon, who seems unable to make a false move, take a false step, or be false even for a second on camera. He's a golden boy with hidden depths, the way Robert Redford was—only Damon is a far more versatile and interesting performer. No, I don't like his politics, but then, he doesn't like mine, either. ♦

John Podhoretz, editor of Commentary, is THE WEEKLY STANDARD's movie critic.



**"Vivian Schiller, the embattled chief executive of NPR, resigned from the organization Wednesday, one day after an embarrassing video surfaced of another NPR executive disparaging conservatives."**

**—Washington Post, March 9, 2011**

**PARODY**



NATIONAL PUBLIC RADIO

*We Report, We Decide*

March 15, 2011

The Honorable John Boehner  
Office of the Speaker  
H-232 The Capitol  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Speaker Boehner:

I write to you today out of concern for the well-being of National Public Radio. Recent events may have given you and your esteemed colleagues the wrong impression of our fair and balanced organization, and I want to assure you that with the exception of a handful of journalists, producers, and executives, NPR is an unbiased network that strives to provide the kind of news you can use—and not just for reasonable, educated Americans living on the Upper West Side, but also for the kind-hearted folk your party represents: gap-toothed farmers in the Midwest, illiterate ditchdiggers in the Deep South, and hillbillies everywhere. To put it simply, we report—we decide.

As you well know, one of our colleagues was recently ambushed by a fascist, racist, deceiving, right-wing piece of scum armed with a hidden camera. In any event, our friend might have made a few inappropriate comments all for the sake of being agreeable. After all, why spoil a lovely lunch at Café Milano? (They make an exquisite Fusilli Bucati Bulgari, which is an Italian pasta dish. You might know pasta as "macaroni." And by Italian, I mean from Italy, a country in Southern Europe.)

My point is this: Just because one or two or more individuals make statements that can be construed as disparaging toward conservatives, it doesn't mean that everyone at National Public Radio feels the same way. I know for a fact some of our employees did not even vote for President Obama. About a dozen staff members voted for Cynthia McKinney and a couple voted for Ralph Nader (we eventually terminated the latter two).

I know you are receiving pressure from your fellow Republicans to defund NPR. I ask you to reconsider. We're not all leftist ideologues. Not all of us think conservatives are uneducated. And we certainly don't think all Tea Baggers are racist.

Sincerely,

Dave Edwards  
Chairman of the Board  
National Public Radio